

Phillips Phonograph.

A MARRIAGE AT SEA.

By W. CLARK RUSSELL.

I.

My dandy-rigged yacht, the Spitfire, of twenty-six tons, lay in Boulogne harbor, hidden in the midnight shadow of the wall against which she floated. It was a breathless night, dark despite the wide spread of cloudless sky that was brilliant with stars. It was hard upon the hour of midnight, and low down where we lay we heard but dimly the sounds of such life as was still abroad in the Boulogne streets. Ahead of us loomed the shadow of a double-funnelled steamer. The Capeure pier made a faint, phantom-like line of gloom as it ran seaward on our left, with here and there a lump of shadow denoting some collier fast to the skeleton timbers. We were waiting for the hour of midnight to strike, and our ears were strained.

"What noise is that?" I exclaimed.

"The dip of sweeps, sir," answered my captain, Aaron Candel; "some smack a-coming along—ay, there she is." And he slowly pointed to a dark, square heap betwixt the piers, softly approaching to the impulse of her long oars.

"How is your pluck now, Candel?" said I, in a low voice, sending a glance up at the dark edge of the harbor wall above us, where stood the motionless figure of a *douanier*.

"Right for the job, sir—right as your honor could desire it. There's but one consideration which ain't like a feeling of sartinty; and that, I must say, consarns the dawg."

"Smother the dog! But you are right. We must leave our boots in the ditch."

"Ain't there plenty of grass, sir?" said he.

"I hope so; but a fathom of gravel will so crunch under such hoofs as yours that the very dead buried beneath might turn in their coffins, let alone a live dog, wide awake from the end of his cold snout to the tip of his tail. Does the ladder chafe you?"

"No, sir. Makes me feel a-bit asthmatic-like, and if them *duniers* get a sight of me they'll reckon I've visited the Continent to make a show of myself," he exclaimed, with a low, deep sea laugh, while he spread his hands upon his breast, around which, under cover of a large, loose, long pea coat, he had coiled a length of rope ladder with two iron hooks at one end of it, which made a lump on either shoulder-blade. There was no other way, however, of carrying the ladder ashore. In the hand it would instantly have challenged attention, and a bag would have been equally an object of curiosity to the two or three custom house phantoms flitting about in triangular-shaped trousers and shako-like head-gear.

"There goes midnight, sir!" cried Candel.

As I listened to the chimes a sudden fit of excitement set me trembling.

"Are ye there, Job?" called my captain.

"Ay, sir," responded a voice from the bows of the yacht.

"Jim?"

"Here, sir," answered a second voice out of the darkness forward.

"Dick?"

"Here, sir."

"Bobby?"

"Here, sir," in the squeaky notes of a boy.

"Lay, aft, all you ship's company, and don't make no noise," growled Candel.

I looked up; the figure of the *douanier* had vanished. The three men and the boy came sneaking out of the yacht's head.

"Now, what ye've got to do," said Candel, "is to keep awake. You'll see all ready for hoisting and gitting away the hinstant Mr. Barclay and me arrives aboard. You understand that?"

"It's good English, cap'n," said one of the sailors.

"No skylarking. You're a-listening, Bobby?"

"Ay, sir."

"You'll just go quietly to work and see all clear, and then tarn to and loaf about in the shadow. Now, Mr. Barclay, sir, if you're ready I am."

"Have you the little bull's-eye in your pocket?" said I. He felt, and answered yes.

"Matches?"

"Two boxes."

"Stop a minute," said I, and I descended into the cabin to read my darling's letter for the last time, that I might make sure of all the details of our romantic plot ere embarking on as hare-brained an adventure as was ever attempted by a lover and his sweetheart.

The cabin lamp burned brightly. I see the little interior now, and myself standing upright under the skylight which found me room for my stature, for I was six feet high. The night shadow came black against the glass, and made a mirror of each pane. My heart was beating fast, and my hands trembled as I held my sweetheart's letter to the light.

The handwriting was girlish; how could it be otherwise, seeing that the sweet writer was not yet eighteen? The letter consisted of four sheets, and on one of them was very cleverly drawn, in pen and ink, a tall, long, narrow, old-fashioned chateau, with some shrubbery in front of it, a short length of wall, then a tall hedge with an arrow pointing at it, under which was written "Here is the hole." Under another arrow, indicating a big, square door to the right of the house, where a second short length of wall was sketched in, were written the words, "Here is the dog." Other arrows—quite a flight of them, indeed, causing the sketch to resemble a weather chart—pointed to windows, doors, a little balcony, and so forth, and against them were written, "Ma'm'selle's room," "The German governess's room," "Four girls sleep here"—with other hints of a like kind. I put the letter in my pocket and went on deck.

"Where are you, Candel?"

"Here, sir," cried a shadow in the starboard gangway.

"Let us start," said I; "there is half an hour's walk before us; and though the agreed time is one, there is a great deal to be done when we arrive."

"I've been thinking Mr. Barclay," he exclaimed, "that the young lady'll never be able to get aboard this yacht by that there up and down ladder," meaning the perpendicular steps affixed to the harbor wall.

"No," cried I, needlessly startled by an insignificant oversight on the threshold of the project.

"The boat," he continued, "had better be in waiting at them stairs, just past the smack astern of us there."

"Give the necessary orders," said I.

He did so swiftly, bidding two of the men to be at the stairs at one o'clock, the others to have the port gangway unshipped to enable us to step aboard in a moment, along with sails loosed and gear all seen to, ready for a prompt start. We then ascended the ladder and gained the top of the quay.

We said little until we cleared the Rue de l'Écu, and were marching up the broad Grande Rue, with the church of St. Nicholas soaring into a dusky mass out of the market-place, and the few lights of the wide main street rising in fitful twinklings to the shadow of the rampart walls. A mounted gendarme passed; the stroke of his horse's hoofs sounded hollow in the broad thoroughfare and accentuated the deserted appearance of the street.

"I shan't be sorry when we're there," said Candel. "This here ladder makes my coat feel a terrible tight fit. I suppose it'll be the first job of the sort ye was ever engaged in, sir?"

"The first," said I, "and the last too, believe me. It is nervous work. I would rather have to deal with an armed burglar than with an elopement. I wish the business was ended and we were heading for Penzance."

"And I don't suppose the young lady feels extra comfortable, either," he exclaimed. "Let me see; I've got to be right in my latitude and longitude, or we shall be finding ourselves ashore. It's for us to make the signal, ain't it, sir?"

"Yes," said I, puffing for the road was steep and we were walking rapidly. "First of all you'll have to prepare the ladder. You haven't forgotten the rungs, I hope?" referring to three brass pieces to keep the ropes extended, contrivances which had been made to my order, resembling stair rods with forks and an arrangement of screws by which they could be disconnected into pieces convenient for the pocket.

"They're here, sir," he said, slapping his breast.

"Well, we proceed thus. The bull's-eye must be cautiously lighted and darkened. We have then to steal noiselessly to abreast of the window on the left of the house and flash the lantern. This will be answered by the young lady striking a match at the window."

"Won't the scraping of the lucifer be heard?" inquired Candel.

"No. Miss Bellassys writes to me that no one sleeps within several corridors of that room."

"Well, and then I think ye said, sir," observed Candel, "that the young lady'll slip out on to the balcony and lower away a small length of line to which this here ladder," he said, giving his breast a thump, "is to be bent on, she hauling of it up."

"Quite right," said I. "You must help her to descend, while I hold the ladder taut at the foot of it. No fear of the ropes breaking, I hope?"

"Lord love 'ee," he cried, heartily, "it's a brand

new ratlin-stuff, strong enough to hoist the mainmast out of a first-rate."

By this time we had gained the top of the Grande Rue. Before us stretched an open space with dark lines of trees; at long intervals the gleam of an oil lamp dotted that space of gloom; on our right lay the dusky mass of the rampart walls, the yawning gateway dully illuminated by the trembling flame of a lantern.

"Which'll be the road, sir?" broke in Candel's tempestuous voice.

I had explored the district that afternoon, had observed all that was necessary, and discovered that the safest if not the surest way to the Rue de Marquetra, where my sweetheart, Grace Bellassys, was at school, lay through the Haute Ville, or Upper Town, as the English called it. The streets were utterly deserted. It was like pacing the streets of a town that had been sacked, in which nothing lived to deliver so much as a groan; and the fancy was not a little improved by our emergence into what resembled a tract of country through a gateway similar to that by which we had entered, over which there faintly glimmered out to the sheen of a near lamp the figure of Our Lady of Boulogne erect in some carving of a boat.

The Rue de Marquetra was—is, I may say; I presume it still exists—a long, narrow lane leading to a pretty valley. Something more than half way up it, on the left-hand side, runs a tall convent wall, the shadow of which, dominated as the heights were by trees, on such a motionless midnight as this, plunged the roadway into deepest gloom.

Directly opposite the convent wall stood by a profusion of shrubbery, with a short length of wall, as I have already said, at both extremities of it. The grounds belonging to the house, as they rose with the hill, were divided from the lane by a thick hedge, which terminated at a distance of some two hundred feet.

We came to a stand and listened, staring our hardest with all our eyes. The house was in blackness; the line of the roof ran in a clear sweep of ink against the stars, and not the faintest sound came from it or its grounds, save the delicate tinkling murmur of a fountain playing somewhere in the shrubbery in front.

"Where'll be the dawg?" exclaimed Candel, in a hoarse whisper.

"Behind the wall there," I answered—"yonder where the great square door is. Hark! Did not that sound like the rattle of a chain?"

We listened; then said I: "Let us make for the hole in the hedge. I have its bearings. It directly fronts the third angle of that convent wall."

We crept soundlessly past the house, treading the verdure that lay in dark streaks upon the glimmering ground of this little frequented lane. The clock of the convent opposite struck half past twelve.

"One bell, sir," said Candel. "It's about time we tamed to, and no mistake. Lord, how I'm perspiring! yet it ben't so hot, neither. Which side of the house do the lady descend from?"

"From this side," I answered.

"Well clear of the dawg, anyhow," said he, "and that's a good job."

"Here's the hole," I cried, with my voice shrill beyond recognition of my own hearing through the nervous excitement I labored under.

The hole was a neglected gap in the hedge, a rent originally made probably by donkey-boys, several of whose cattle I had remarked that afternoon browsing along the ditch and bankside. We squeezed through, and found ourselves in a sort of kitchen garden, as I might imagine from the aspect of the shadowy vegetation; it seemed to run clear to the very walls of the house on this side in dwarf bushes and low ridged growths.

"Here'll be a path, I hope," growled Candel. "What am I a-treading on? Cabbages? They crackle worse nor gravel, Mr. Barclay."

"Clear yourself of the rope ladder, and then I'll smother you in your pea coat while you light the lamp," said I. "Let us keep well in the shadow of the heige. Who knows what eyes may be star gazing yonder?"

The heige flung a useful dye upon the blackness of the night, and our figures against it, though they should have been viewed close to, must have been indistinguishable. With a seaman's alacrity, Candel slipped off his immense coat, and in a few moments had unwound the length of ladder from his body. He wore a colored flannel shirt; I had dreaded to find him figuring in white calico. He dropped the ladder to the ground, and the iron hooks clanked as they fell together. I hissed a sea blessing at him through my teeth.

"Have you no wick in those tallow candle fingers of yours? Hush! Stand motionless."

As I spoke, the dog began to bark. That it was the dog belonging to the house I could not swear. The sound, nevertheless, proceeded from the direction of the yard in which my sweetheart had told me the dog was chained. The deep and melancholy note was like that of a bloodhound giving tongue. It was reverberated by the convent wall, and seemed to penetrate to the furthest distance, awaking the very echoes of the sleeping river lane, and it filled the breathless pause that had fallen upon us with a torrent of inquietude and expectation. After a few minutes the creature ceased.

"He'll be a whopper, sir. Big as a pony, sir, if his voice don't belie him," said Caudel, fetching a deep breath. "I was once bit by a dawg—" He was about to spin a yarn.

"For Heaven's sake, now, bear a hand, and get your bull's-eye alight," I angrily whispered, at the same moment snatching up his coat and so holding it as effectually to screen his figure from the house.

Feeling over the coat, he pulled out the little bull's-eye lamp and a box of matches, and catching with oceanic dexterity the flame of the lucifer in the hollow of his hands, he kindled the wick, and I immediately closed the lantern with its glass eclipsed. This done, I directed my eyes at the black smears of growths—for thus they showed—lying round about us in search of a path; but apparently we were on the margin of some wide tract of vegetables through which we should have to thrust to reach the stretch of sward that, according to the description in my pocket, lay immediately under the balcony from which my sweetheart was to descend.

"Pick up that ladder—by the hooks; see they don't clank; crouch low; make a bush of yourself as I do, and come along," said I.

Foot by foot we groped our way toward the tall, thin shadow of the house through the cabbages—to give the vegetation a name—and presently arrived at the edge of the sward; and now we had to wait until the clock struck one. Fortunately there were some bushes here, but none that rose higher than our girths, and this obliged us to maintain a posture of stooping which in a short time began to tell upon Caudel's rheumatic knees, as I knew by his snuffling and his uneasy movements, though the heart of oak suffered in silence.

This side of the house lay so black against the fine, clear, starry dusk of the sky that it was impossible to see the outlines of the windows in it. I could manage, however, to trace faintly the line of the balcony. My heart beat fast as I thought that even now my darling might be standing at the window peering through it, waiting for the signal flash. Caudel was thinking of her too.

"The young lady, begging of your pardon, sir, must be a gal of uncommon spirit, Mr. Barclay."

"She loves me, Caudel, and love is the most animating of spirits, my friend."

"I don't doubt it, sir. What room'll it be that she's to come out of?"

"The dining-room—a big, deserted apartment where the girls take their meals."

"Tain't her bedroom, then?"

"No. She is to steal dressed from her bedroom to the *salle-a-manger*."

"The Sally what, sir?"

"No matter, no matter," I answered.

I pulled out my watch, but there was no power in the starlight to reveal the dial-plate. All continued still as the tomb, saving at fitful intervals a low note of silken rustling, that stole upon the ear with some tender, dream-like gushing of night air, as though the atmosphere had been stirred by the sweep of a large, near, invisible pinion.

"This here posture ain't so agreeable as dancing," hoarsely rambled Caudel. "Could almost wish myself a dwarf. That there word beginning with a Sally—"

"Not so loud, man; not so loud."

"It's uncommon queer," he persisted, "to feel one's self in a country where one's language ain't spoke. The werry soil don't seem natural. As to the language itself, burst me if I can understand how a man masters it. I was once trying to teach a Irish sailor how to dance a quadrille. 'Now, Murphy,' says I to him, 'you understand you're my wis-a-wee.' 'What's dat you call me?' he cried out; 'you're anoder, and a damn scoundrel besides!' Half the words in this here tongue sound like cussing of a man. And to think of a dining-room being called a Sally—"

The convent clock struck one.

"Now," said I, "stand by."

I held up the lamp, and so turned the darkened part as to produce two flashes. A moment after, a tiny flame showed and vanished above the balcony.

"My brave darling!" I exclaimed. "Have you the ladder in your hand?"

"Ay, sir."

"Mind those confounded hooks don't clink."

We stepped across the sward and stood under the balcony.

"Grace, my darling, is that you?" I called, in a low voice.

"Yes, Herbert. Oh, please be quick. I am fancying I hear footsteps. My heart is scarcely beating for fright."

But, despite the tremble in her sweet voice, my ear seemed to find strength of purpose enough in it to satisfy me that there would be no failure from want of courage on her part. I could just discern the outline of her figure as she leaned over the balcony, and see the white of her face vague as a fancy.

"My darling, lower the line to pull the ladder up

with. Very softly, my pet; there are iron hooks which make a noise."

In a few moments she called, "I have lowered the line."

I felt about with my hand and grasped the end of it—a piece of twine, but strong enough to support the ladder. The deep bloodhound-like baying of the dog recommenced, and at the same time I heard the sound of footsteps in the lane.

"Hist! Not a stir—not a whisper," I breathed out. It was the staggering step of a drunken man. He broke maudlinly into a song when immediately abreast of us, ceased his noise suddenly, and halted. "This was a little passage of agony, I can assure you. The dog continued to utter its sullen, deep-throated bark in single strokes like the beat of a bell. Presently there was a sound as of the scrambling and scrunching of feet, followed by the noise of a lurching tread; the man fell to drunkenly singing to himself again, and so passed away up the lane."

Caudel fastened the end of the twine to the ladder, and then grunted out, "All ready for holisting."

"Grace, my sweet," I whispered, "do you hear me?"

"Distinctly, dearest; but I am so frightened!"

"Pull up this ladder softly, and hook the irons on to the rim of the balcony."

"Blast that dawg!" growled Caudel. "Damned if I don't think he smells us!"

"It is hooked, Herbert."

"All right. Caudel, swing off your end of it—test it, and then aloft with you, for mercy's sake!"

The three metal rings held the ropes bravely stretched apart. The seaman sprang, and the ladder held as though it had been the shrouds of a man-of-war.

"Now, Caudel, you are a seaman; you must do the rest," said I.

He had removed his boots, and, mounting with cat-like agility, gained the balcony; then taking my sweetheart in his arms, he lifted her over the rail and lowered her with his powerful arms until her little feet were half way down the ladder. She uttered one or two faint exclamations, but was happily too frightened to cry out.

"Now, Mr. Barclay," hoarsely whispered Caudel, "you kitch hold of her, sir."

I grasped the ladder with one hand and passed my arm round her waist; my stature made the feat an easy one; thus holding her to me, I sprang back, then for an instant strained her to my heart with a whisper of joy, gratitude and encouragement.

"You are as brave as you are true and sweet, Grace."

"Oh, Herbert," she panted. "I can think of nothing. I am very wicked, and feel horribly frightened."

"Mr. Barclay," softly called Caudel from the balcony, "what's to be done with this here ladder?"

"Let it be, let it be," I answered. "Bear a hand, Caudel, and come down."

He was along side of us in a trice, pulling on his boots. I held my darling's hand, and the three of us made for the hole in the hedge with all possible speed. But the cabbages were very much in the way of Grace's dress, and so urgent was the need of haste that I believe in my fashion of helping her I carried her one way or another more than half the distance across that wide tract of kitchen-garden stuff.

The dog continued to bark. I asked Grace if the brute belonged to the house, and she answered yes. There seemed little doubt from the persistency of the creature's deep delivery that it scented mischief going forward, despite its kennel standing some considerable distance away on the other side of the house. I glanced back as Caudel was squeezing through the hole—I had told him to go first, to make sure that all was right with the aperture and to receive and help my sweetheart across the ditch—I glanced back, I say, in this brief pause; but the building showed as an impenetrable shadow against the winking brilliance of the sky hovering over and past it, rich with radiance in places of meteoric dust; no light gleamed; the night hush, deep as death, was upon the chateau.

In a few moments my captain and I had carefully handed Grace through the hole and got her safe in the lane, and off we started, keeping well in the deep gloom cast by the convent wall, walking swiftly, yet noiselessly, and scarcely fetching our breath till we were clear of the lane, with the broad, glimmering St. Omer road running in a rise upon our left.

II.

By the aid of the three or four lamp-posts we had passed I managed very early to get a view of my sweetheart, and found that she had warmly robed herself in a fur-trimmed jacket, and that her hat was a sort of turban, as though chosen from her wardrobe with a view to her passage through the hole in the ledge. I had her hand under my arm, and pressed and caressed it as we walked. Caudel, taking the earth with sailorly strides, bowed and rolled along at her right, keeping between us. I spoke to her in hasty sentences, forever praising her for her courage and thanking her for her love, and trying to hearten her; for now that the first desperate step had been taken, now that the wild risks of escape were ended, the spirit that supported her had failed; she could scarcely answer me; at moments she would direct looks over her shoulder; the mere figure of a tree would cause her to tighten her hold of my arm.

"I feel so wicked! I feel that I ought to return!

Oh, how frightened I am! how late it is! What will ma'm'selle think? How the girls will talk in the morning!"

I could coax no more than this sort of exclamation from her.

As we passed through the gate in the rampart walls and entered the Haute Ville, my captain broke the silence he had kept since we quitted the lane.

"How little do the folks who's a-sleeping in them houses know, Mr. Barclay, of what's a-passing under their noses! There ain't no sort of innocence like sleep."

He said this and yawned with a noise that resembled a shout.

"This is Captain Caudel, Grace," said I, "the master of the Spitfire. His services to-night I shall never forget."

"I am too frightened to thank you, Captain Caudel," she exclaimed. "I will thank you when I am calm. But shall I ever be calm? And ought I to thank you then?"

"Have no fear, miss. This here oneasiness'll soon pass. I know the yarn; his honor spun it to me. What's been done, and what's yet to do, is right and proper; if it worn't—" his pause was more significant than had he proceeded.

Until we reached the harbor we did not encounter a living creature. I could never have imagined of the old town of Boulogne that its streets, late even as the hour was, would be so utterly deserted as we found them. I was satisfied with my judgment in not having ordered a carriage. The rattling of the wheels of a vehicle amid the vault-like stillness of those thoroughfares would have been heart-stabbing to my mood of passionately nervous anxiety to get on board and away. I should have figured windows flung open and night-capped heads projected, and heard in imagination the clanking sabre of a gendarme trotting in our wake.

I did not breathe freely till the harbor lay before us. Caudel said, as we crossed to where the flight of steps fell to the water's edge:

"I believe there's a little air of wind moving."

"I feel it," I answered. "What's its quarter?"

"Seems to me off the land," said he.

"There is a man!" cried Grace, arresting me by a drag at my arm.

A figure stood at the head of the steps, and I believed it one of our men, until a few strides brought us near enough to witness the gleam of a uniform showing by the pale light of a lamp at a short distance from him.

"A *douanier*," said I. "Nothing to be afraid of, my pet."

"But if he should stop us, Herbert?" cried she, halting.

"Sooner than that should happen," rumbled Caudel, "I'd chuck him overboard. But why should he stop us, miss? We ain't smugglers."

"I would rather throw myself into the water than be taken back," exclaimed my sweetheart.

I gently induced her to walk, while my captain, advancing to the edge of the quay and looking down, sung out:

"Below there! Are ye awake?"

"Ay, wide awake," was the answer, floating up in hearty English accents from the cold, dark surface on which the boat lay.

The *douanier* drew back a few steps; it was impossible to see his face, but his steadfast suspicious regard was to be imagined. I have no doubt he understood exactly what was happening. He asked us the name of our vessel. I answered, in French, "The small yacht Spitfire, lying astern of the Folkestone steamer." Nothing more passed, and we descended the steps.

I felt Grace shiver as I handed her into the boat. The oars dipped, striking a dim cloud of phosphor into the eddies they made; and a few strokes of the blade carried us to the low side of the little Spitfire. I sprang on to the deck, and lifting my darling through the gangway, called to Caudel to make haste to get the boat in and start, for the breeze that had before been little more than a fancy to us I could now hear as it brushed the surface of the harbor wall, making the reflection in the larger stars in the water alongside twinkle and widen out, and putting a perfume of fresh sea-weed into the atmosphere, though the draught, such as it was, came from a malodorous quarter.

I led Grace to the little companion-hatch, and together we entered the cabin. The lamp burned brightly, the skylight lay open, and the interior was cool and sweet with several pots of flowers which I had sent aboard in the afternoon. It was but a little box of a place, as you will suppose of a dandy craft of twenty-six tons; but I had not spared my purse in decorating it, and I believe no prettier interior of the kind in a vessel of the size of the Spitfire was in those times afloat. There were two sleeping-rooms, one forward and one aft. The after-cabin was little better than a hole, and this I occupied. The berth forward, on the other hand, was as roomy as the dimensions of the little ship would allow, and I had taken care that it lacked nothing to make it a pleasant—I may say elegant—sea bedroom. It was to be Grace's until I got her ashore; and this I counted upon managing in about four days from the date of this night about which I am writing.

She stood at the table, looking about her, breathing fast, her eyes large with alarm, excitement, I know not what other sensations and emotions. I wish I knew how to praise her, how to describe her. "Sweet" is the best word to express her girlish beauty. Though she was three months short of eighteen years of age, she might readily have passed

for twenty-one, so womanly was her figure, as though indeed she was tropic-bred and had been reared under suns which quickly ripen a maiden's beauty. But to say more would be to say what? The liquid brown of her large and glowing eyes, the dark and delicate bronze of her rich abundant hair, the suggestion of a pout in the turn of her lip that gave an incomparable air of archness to her expression when her countenance was in repose—to enumerate these things, to deliver a catalogue of her graces in the most felicitous language that love and the memory of love could dictate, is yet to leave all that I could wish to say unsaid.

"At last, Grace!" I exclaimed, lifting her hand to my lips. "How is with you now, my pet?"

She seated herself and hid her face in her hands upon the table, saying, "I don't know how I feel, Herbert. I know how I ought to feel."

"Wait a little. You will regain your courage. You will find nothing wrong in all this presently. It was bound to happen. There was not the least occasion for this business of rope-ladders and midnight sailings. It is Lady Amelia who forces this elopement upon us."

"What will she say?" she breathed through her fingers, still keeping her face hidden to conceal the crimson that had flushed her on a sudden and that was showing to the rim of her collar.

"Do you care? Do I care? We have forced her hand; and what can she do? If you were but twenty-one, Grace!—and yet I don't know! you would be three years older—three years of sweetness gone forever! But the old lady will have to give her consent now, and the rest will be for my cousin Frank to manage. Pray look at me, my sweet one."

"I can't. I am ashamed. It is a most desperate act. What will ma'm'selle say?—and your sailors?" she murmured from behind her hands.

"My sailors! Grace, shall I take you back whilst there is yet time?"

She flashed a look at me over her finger-tips. "Certainly not!" she exclaimed, with emphasis, then hid her face again.

I seated myself by her side, but it took me five minutes to get her to look at me, and another five minutes to coax a smile from her. In this while the men were busy about the decks. I heard Caudel's growling lungs of leather delivering orders in a half-stifed hurricane note, but I did not know that we were under way until I put my head through the companion-hatch and saw the dusky fabrics of the piers on either side stealing almost insensibly past us. Now that the wide expanse of sky had opened over the land, I could witness a dimness as of the shadowing of clouds in the quarter against which stood the block of the cathedral.

"What is the weather to be, Caudel?" I called to him.

"We're going to get a breeze from the south'ard, sir," he answered; "nothin' to harm, I dessay, if it don't draw westerly."

"What is your plan of sailing?"

"Can't do better, I think, sir, than stand over for the English coast, and so run down, keeping the ports conveniently aboard."

I re-entered the cabin, and found my sweetheart with her elbow on the table and her cheeks resting in her hands. The blush had scarcely faded from her face when I had quitted her; now she was as white as a lily.

"Why do you leave me alone, Herbert?" she asked, turning her dark, liquid eyes upon me without shifting the posture of her head.

"My dearest, I wish to see our little ship clear of Boulogne harbor. We shall be getting a pleasant breeze presently, and it cannot blow too hard to please us. A brisk fair wind should land us at our destination in three days; and then—and then—" said I, sitting down and bringing her to me.

She laid her cheek on my shoulder, but said nothing.

"Now," I exclaimed, "you are, of course, faint and wretched for want of refreshment. What can I get you?" and I was about to give her a list of the wines and eatables I had laid in, but she languidly shook her head as it rested upon my shoulder and faintly bade me not to speak of refreshments.

"I should like to lie down," she said.

"You are tired—worn out," I exclaimed, not yet seeing how it was with her. "Yonder is your cabin; I believe you will find all you want in it. Unhappily, we have no maid aboard to help you. But you will be able to manage, Grace; it is but for a day or two; and if you are not perfectly happy and comfortable, why, we will make for the nearest English port and finish the rest of the journey by rail. But our little yacht—"

"I must lie down," she interrupted. "This dreadful motion! Get me a pillow and a rug; I will lie on this sofa."

I could have heaped a hundred injurious names upon my head for not at once observing that the darling was suffering. I sprang from her side, hastily procured a pillow and rug, removed her hat, plunged afresh into her cabin for some eau de Cologne, and went to work to bathe her brow and to minister to her in other ways. To be afflicted with nausea in the most romantic passage of one's life! I had never thought of inquiring whether or not she was a "good sailor," as it is called, being much too sentimental, far too much in love, to be visited by misgivings or conjectures in a direction so horribly prosaic as this.

It was some time after three o'clock in the morning when Grace fell asleep. The heave of the vessel had entirely conquered emotion. She had had no

smile for me; the handkerchief she had held to her mouth had kept her lips sealed; but her eyes were never more beautiful than now, with their languishing expression of suffering, and I could not remove my gaze from her face, so exceedingly sweet did she look as she lay with the rich bronze of her hair glittering, as though gold-dusted, to the lamp-light, and her brow showing with an ivory gleam through the tresses which shadowed it in charming disorder.

She fell asleep at last, breathing quietly, and I cannot tell how it comforted me to find her able to sleep, for now I might hope it would not take many hours of rest to qualify her as a sailor. In all this time that I had been below refreshing her brow and attending to her, and watching her as a picture of which my sight could never grow weary, the breeze had freshened, and the yacht was heeling to it, and taking the wrinkled sides of the swell—that grew heavier as we widened the offing—with the shearing hissing sweep that one notices in a steam launch. Grace lay on a lee locker, and, as the weather rolls of the little Spitfire were small, there was no fear of my sweetheart slipping off the couch.

And now I must tell you here that my little dandy yacht the Spitfire was so brave, staunch, and stout a craft that, though I am no lover of the sea in its angry moods, and especially have no relish for such experiences as one is said to encounter, for instance, off Cape Horn, yet, such was my confidence in her seaworthiness, I should have been quite willing to sail round the world in her had the necessity for so tedious an adventure arisen. She had been built as a smack, but was found too fast for trawling, and the owner offered her as a bargain. I purchased and re-equipped her, little dreaming that she was one day to win me a wife. I improved her cabin accommodation, handsomely furnished her within, and caused her to be sheathed with yellow metal to the bends and to be embellished with gilt at the stern and quarters. She had a fine bold spring or rise of deck forward, with abundance of beam which warranted her for stability; but her submerged lines were extraordinarily fine, and I cannot recollect the name of a pleasure-craft at that time which I should not have been willing to challenge whether for a fifty or a thousand-mile race. She was rigged as a dandy—a term that no reader, I hope, will want me to explain.

I stood, cigar in mouth, looking up at her canvas, and round upon the dark scene of ocean, while, the lid of the skylight being a little way open, I was almost within arm's reach of my darling, whose lightest call would reach my ear or least movement take my eye. The stars were dim away over the port quarter, and I could distinguish the outlines of clouds hanging in dusky vaporous bodies over the black mass of the coast dotted with lights where Boulogne lay, with Cape Gris Nez lantern flashing on high from its shoulder of land that blended in a dye of ink with the gloom of the horizon. There were little runs of froth in the ripple of the water, with now and again a phosphoric glancing that instinctively sent the eye to the dimness in the west, as though it were sheet-lightning there which was being reflected. Broad abeam was a large gloomy collier "reaching" in for Boulogne harbor; she showed a gaunt, ribbed, and heeling figure, with her yards almost fore and aft, and not a hint of life aboard her in the foam of light or noise.

I felt sleepless—never so broad awake, despite this business now in hand that had robbed me for days past of hour after hour of slumber, so that I may safely say I had scarcely enjoyed six hours of solid sleep in as many days. Caudel still grasped the tiller, and forward was one of the men restlessly but noiselessly pacing the little fore-castle. The hiss of the froth at the yacht's forefoot threw a shrewd bleakness to the light pouring off the off-shore wind, and I buttoned up my coat as I turned to Caudel, though excitement worked much too hotly in my soul to suffer me to feel conscious of the cold.

"This breeze will do, Caudel, if it holds," said I, approaching him by a stride or two, that my voice should not disturb Grace.

"Ay, sir, it is as pretty a little air as could be asked for."

"What light is that away out yonder?"

"The Varne, your honor."

"And where are you carrying the little ship to?" said I, looking at the illuminated disk of compass-card that swung in the short brass binnacle under his nose.

"Ye see the course, Mr. Barclay—west by north. That'll fetch Beachy Head for us; afterward a small shift of the helm'll put the Channel under our bows, keeping the British ports as we go along handy, so that if your honor don't like the look of the bayrometer, why, there's always a harbor within easy sail."

I was quite willing that Caudel should heave the English land into sight. He had been bred in coasters, and knew his way about by the mere smell of the shore, as the sailors say; whereas put him in the middle of the ocean with nothing but his sextant to depend upon, and I do not know that I should have felt very sure of him.

He coughed, and seemed to mumble to himself as he ground upon the piece of tobacco in his cheek, then said, "And how's the young lady a-doing, sir?"

"The motion of the vessel rendered her somewhat uneasy, but she is now sleeping."

"Sorry to hear she don't feel well, sir," he exclaimed; "but this here seasickness, I'm told, soon passes."

"I want her to be well," said I. "I wish her to enjoy the run down Channel. We must not go ashore if we can help it, or one special object I

have in my mind will be defeated."

"Shall I keep the yacht well out, then, sir? No need to draw in, if so be—"

"No, no; sight the coast, Caudel, and give us a view of the scenery. And now, while I have the chance, let me thank you heartily for the service you have done me to-night. I should have been helpless without you; what other man of my crew—what other man of any sort, indeed—could I have depended upon?"

"Oh, don't mention it, Mr. Barclay, sir; I beg and entreat that you won't mention it, sir," he replied, as though affected by my condescension. "You're a gentleman, sir, begging your pardon, and that means a man of honor; and when you told me how things stood, why, putting all dooty on one side, if so be as there *can* be such a thing as dooty in jobs which aren't shipshape and proper, why, I says, of course I was willing to be of use. Not that I myself have much confidence in these here 'elopements,' saving your presence. I've a grown-up darter myself in service, and if when she gets married she don't make a straight course for the meeting-house, why, then I shall have to talk to her as she's never yet been talked to. But in this job"—he swung off from the tiller to expectorate over the rail—"what the young lady's been and gone and done is what I should say to my darter or any other young woman, the circumstances being the same, 'Go thon and dew likewise.'"

"You see, Caudel, there was no hope of gaining her ladyship's consent."

"No, sir."

"Then consider the cruelty of sending the young lady to a foreign school for no fairer or kinder reason than to remove her out of my way."

"I understand, sir; and I'm of opinion it was quite time the little game was stopped."

"Lady Amelia Roscoe is a Roman Catholic, and very bigoted. Ever since she first took charge of Miss Bellassys she has been trying to convert her, and by methods, I assure you, by no means uniformly kind."

"So you was a-saying, sir."

It pleased me to be thus candid with this sailor. Possibly there was in me a little disturbing sense of the need of justifying myself, though I believe the most acclimated moralist could not have glanced through the skylight without feeling that I heartily deserved forgiveness.

"But supposing, Mr. Barclay, sir," continued Caudel, "that *you'd* ha' changed your religion and became a papish, would her ladyship still ha' gone on objecting to ye?"

"Supposing! Yes, Caudel, she would have gone on objecting even then. There are family feelings, family traditions, mixed up in her dislike of me. You shall have the yarn before we go ashore. It is right that you should know the whole truth. Until I make that young lady below my wife, she is as much under your care as under mine. That was agreed on between us, and that you know."

"That I do know, and shall remember as much for her sake as for yours and for mine," answered the honest fellow, with a note of deep feeling in his voice. "There's only one consideration, Mr. Barclay, that worries me. I understand you to say, sir, that your honor has a cousin who's a clergyman that's willing to marry ye right away out of hand."

"We must get the consent of the aunt first."

"There it is!" cried he, smiting the head of the tiller with his clinched fist. "Suppose she don't consent?"

"We have taken this step," said I, softly, always afraid of disturbing my sweetheart, "to force her to consent. D'ye think she can refuse after she hears of this elopement—this midnight, rope-ladder business—and the days we hope to spend together on this little Spitfire?"

"Still, Mr. Barclay, supposing she *do*, sir? You'll forgive me for saying of it; but supposing she *do*, sir?"

"No good in supposing, Caudel," said I, suppressing a little movement of irritation; "no good in obstructing one's path by suppositions stuck up like so many fences to stop one from advancing. Our first business is to get to Penzance."

By his motions, and the uneasy shifting of his posture, he discovered himself ill at ease, but his respectfulness would not suffer him to persevere with his inquiries.

"Caudel," said I, "you may ask me any questions you please. The more you show yourself really anxious on behalf of Miss Bellassys, the more I shall honor you. Don't fear, I shall never interpret your concern for her into a doubt for me. If Lady Amelia absolutely refuses her sanction, what then remains but to place Miss Bellassys with my sister and wait till she comes of age?"

So saying, and now considering that I had said enough, I threw the end of my cigar overboard and went below.

It was daylight shortly before six, but the gray of the dawn brightened into sunshine before Grace awoke. Throughout the hours she had slept without a stir. From time to time I had dozed, chin on breast, opposite to where she lay. The wind had freshened, and the yacht was lying well down to it, swarming along, taking buoyantly the little sea that had risen, and filling the breeze that was musical with the harmonies of the faint rigging with the swift noise of seething water. The square of heavens showing in the skylight overhead wore a hard, marbled, windy look, but the pearl-colored streaks of vapor floated high and motionless, and I was yachtsman enough to gather from what I saw that there was nothing more in all this than a fresh

Channel morning, and a sweep of southerly wind that was driving the Spitfire along her course at some eight or nine miles in the hour.

As the misty pink flash of the upper limb of the rising sun struck the skylight and made a very prism of the little cabin, with its mirrors and silver lamp and glass and brass ornamentation, Grace opened her eyes. She opened them straight upon me, and while I might have counted ten she continued to stare as though she were in a trance; then the blood flooded her pale cheeks, her eyes grew brilliant with astonishment, and she sat erect, bringing her hands to her temples as though she struggled to re-collect her wits. However, it was not long before she rallied, though for some few moments her face remained empty of intelligence.

"Why, Grace, my darling," I cried, "do not you know where you are?"

"Yes, now I do," she answered; "but I thought I had gone mad when I first awoke and looked around me."

"You have slept soundly; but then you are a child," said I.

"Whereabouts are we, Herbert?"

"I cannot tell for sure," I answered; "out of sight of land, any way. But where you are, Grace, you ought to know."

A few caresses, and then her timid glances began to show like the old looks in her. I asked if the movement of the yacht rendered her uneasy, and after a pause, during which she considered with a grave face, she answered, no; she felt better, she must try to stand; and so saying, she stood up on the swaying deck, and smiling, with her fine eyes fastened upon my face, poised her figure in a floating way full of a grace far above dancing, to my fancy. Her gaze went to a mirror, and I easily interpreted her thoughts, though for my part I found her beauty improved by her rouged hair.

"There is your cabin," said I. "The door is behind those curtains. Take a peep and tell me if it pleases you."

There were flowers in it to sweeten the atmosphere, and every imaginable convenience that it was possible for a male imagination to hit upon in its efforts in a direction of this sort. She praised the little berth and closed the door with a smile at me that made me conjecture I should not hear much more from her about our imprudence, the impropriety of our conduct, what ma'm'selle would think, and what the school-girls would say.

Though she was but a child, as I would tell her, I too was but a boy, for the matter of that, and her smile and the look she had given me, and her praise of the little berth I had fitted up for her, made me feel so boyishly joyous that, like a boy as I was, though above six feet tall, I fell a-whistling out of my high spirits, and then kissed the feather in her hat, and her gloves, which lay upon the table, afterward springing in a couple of bounds on deck, where I stood roaring out for Bobby Allett.

A seaman named Job Crew was at the helm. Two others, named Jim Foster and Dick Files, were washing down the decks. I asked Crew where Caudel was, and he told me he had gone below to shave. I bawled again for Bobby Allett, and after a moment or two he rose through the fore-castle hatch. He was a youth of about fifteen who had been shipped by Caudel to serve as steward or cabin-boy and to make himself generally useful besides. As he approached I eyed him with some misgiving, though I had found nothing to object to in him before; but the presence of my sweetheart in the cabin had, I suppose, tempered my taste to a quality of love-like fastidiousness, and this boy Bobby to my mind looked dirty.

"Do you mean to wait upon me in those clothes?" said I.

"They're the best I have, master," he answered, staring at me with a pair of round eyes out or a dingy skin that was certainly not clarified by the number of freckles and pimples which decorated him.

"You can look smarter than that if you like," said I to him. "I want breakfast right away off. And let Foster drop his bucket and go to work to boil and cook. But tell Captain Caudel also that before you lay aft you must clean yourself, polish your face, brush your hair and shoes, and if you haven't got a clean shirt you must borrow one."

The boy went forward.

"Pity," said I, thinking aloud rather than talking as I stepped to the binnacle to mark the yacht's course, "that Caudel should have shipped such a dingy-skinned chap as that fellow for cabin use."

"It's all along of his own doing, sir," said Job Crew.

"How? You mean he won't wash himself?"

"No, sir. It's all along of smoking."

"Smoking?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. I know his father; he's a waterman. His father told me that that there boy Bobby saved up, and then laid out all he'd got upon a meerschaum pipe for to color it. He kep' all on a-smoking, day after day and night after night. But his father says to me it was no go, sir; 'stead of his coloring the pipe, the pipe colored him, and his weins have run nothin' but tobacco juice ever since."

I burst into a laugh, and went to the rail to take a look round. We might have been in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, so boundless did the spread of waters look; not a blob or film of coast on any hand of us broke the flawless sweep of the green circle of Channel sea. There was a steady breeze off the port beam, and the yacht, with every cloth which she carried on her, was driving through it as though she were in tow of a steamboat.

III.

I stood leaning over the bulwarks, humming no air. Never had my heart beaten with so exquisite a sense of gladness and of happiness as now possessed it. I was disturbed in a reverie of love, in which were mingled the life and beauty of the scene I surveyed, by the arrival of Caudel. He was varnished with soap and blue with recent shaving, but in the little sea-blue eyes which glittered under his somewhat raggedly thatched brow there was no trace of the sleepless hours I had forced him to pass. He was a man about fifty years of age; his dark hair was here and there of an iron gray, and a roll of short-cut whiskers met in a bit of a beard upon the bone in his throat. He carried a true salt-water air in his somewhat bowed legs, in his slow motions, and in his trick of letting his arms hang up and down as though they were pump handles. His theory of dress was that what kept out the cold also kept out the heat, and so he never varied his attire—which was composed of a thick double-breasted waistcoat, a long pilot-cloth coat, a Scotch cap, very roomy pilot-cloth trousers, a worsted cravat, and fishermen's stockings.

I exchanged a few words with him about the boy Bobby, inquired the situation of the yacht, and after some talk of this kind, during which I gathered that he was taking advantage of the breeze and shaping a somewhat more westerly course than he had at first proposed, so that he did not expect to make the English coast much before three or four o'clock in the afternoon, I went below, to refresh myself after the laborious undertaking of the night.

On quitting my berth I found the boy Bobby laying the cloth for breakfast, and Grace seated on a locker watching him. Her face was pale, but its expression was without uneasiness. She had put on her hat, and on seeing me exclaimed:

"Herbert, dear, take me on deck. The fresh air may revive me." And she looked at the boy and the cloth he was laying, with a pout full of meaning.

I at once took her by the hand and conducted her through the hatch. She passed her arm through mine to balance herself, and then sent her eyes, bright with nervousness and astonishment, round the sea, breathing swiftly.

"Where is the land?" she asked.

"Behind the ocean, my love. But we shall be having a view of the right side of these waters presently."

"What a little boat!" she exclaimed, running her gaze over the yacht. "Is it not dangerous to be in so small a vessel out of sight of land?"

"Bless your heart, no! Think of the early navigators! Of course ma'm'selle taught you all about the early navigators?"

"When shall we reach Penzance?"

"Supposing the wind to blow fairly and briskly, in three or four days."

"Three or four days!" she exclaimed; and glancing down at herself, she added, "Of course you know, Herbert, that I have only the dress I am wearing?"

"It will last you till we get ashore," said I, laughing, "and then you shall buy everything you want, which, of course, will be more than you want."

"I shall send," said she, "to Ma'm'selle Championnet for my boxes."

"Certainly—when we are married."

"All your presents, particularly the darling little watch, are in those boxes, Herbert."

"Everything shall be recovered, to the uttermost ha'porth, my pet."

I observed Caudel, who stood a little forward of the companion, gazing at her with an expression of shyness and admiration. I told her that he was the captain of the yacht, that he was the man I had introduced to her last night, and begged her to speak to him. She colored a rose red, but bade him good morning, nevertheless, accompanying the words with an inclination of her form, the graceful and easy dignity of which somehow made me think of the movement of a heavily foliaged bough set courtesying by the summer wind.

"I hope, miss," said Caudel, pulling off his Scotch cap, "as how I see you well this morning, freed from that there nausea as Mr. Barclay was a-telling me you suffered from?"

"I trust to get used to the sea quickly; the motion of the yacht is not what I like," she answered, with her face averted from him, taking a peep at me to observe if I saw that she felt ashamed, and would not confront him.

He perceived this, too, and knuckling his forehead, said, "It's but a little of the sea ye shall have, miss, if so be as it lies in my power to keep this here Spitfire a-walking." And, so speaking, he moved off, singing out some idle order as he did so, by way of excusing his abrupt departure.

"I wish we were quite alone, Herbert," said my sweetheart, drawing me to the yacht's rail.

"So do I, my own, but not here; not in the middle of the sea."

"I did not think of bringing a veil. Your men stare so."

"And so do I," said I, letting my gaze sink fair into her eyes which she had upturned to me. "You wouldn't have me rebuke the poor, harmless sailor men for doing what I am every instant guilty of?—admiring you, I mean, to the very topmost height of my capacity in that way. But here comes Master Bobby Allett with the breakfast."

"Herbert, I could not eat for worlds!"

"Are you so much in love as all that?"

She shook her head, and looked at the flowing lines of green water which melted into snow as

they came curving with glass-clear backs to the ruddy streak of the yacht's sheathing. However, the desire to keep her at sea until we could land ourselves close to the spot where we were to be married made me too anxious to conquer the uneasiness which the motion of the vessel excited, to humor her. I coaxed and implored, and eventually got her below, and by dint of talking and engaging her attention, and making her forget herself, so to speak, I managed to betray her into breaking her fast with a cup of tea and a fragment of cold chicken. This was an accomplishment of which I had some reason to feel proud; but then, to be sure, I was in the secret, knowing this—that sea nausea is entirely an affair of the nerves, that no sufferer is ill in his sleep, no matter how high the sea may be running or how unendurable to his waking senses the sky-high capers and abysmal plunges of the vessel may be, and that the correct treatment for seasickness is—not to think of it. In short, I made my sweetheart forget to feel uneasy. She talked, she sipped her tea, she eat, and then she looked better, and, indeed, owned that she felt so.

We sat together in earnest conversation. It was not for me to pretend that I could witness no imprudence in our elopement. Indeed, I took care to let her know that I regretted the step we had been forced into taking as fully as she did. My love was an influence upon her, and whatever I said I felt might weigh with her childish heart. But I repeated what I had again and again written to her—that there had been no other alternative than this elopement.

"You wished me to wait," I said, "until you were twenty-one when you would be your own mistress. But to wait for more than three years! What was to happen in that time? They might have converted you!"

"No," she cried.

"—and have wrought a complete change in your nature," I went on. "How many girls are there who could resist the sort of pressure they were subjecting you to, one way and another?"

"They could not have changed my heart, Herbert."

"How can we tell? Under their influence in another year you might have come to congratulate yourself upon your escape from me."

"Do you think so? Then you should have granted me another year, because marriage," she added, with a look in her eyes that was like a wistful smile, "is a very serious thing, and if you believe that I should be rejoicing in a year hence over my escape from you, as you call it, you must believe that I have no business to be here."

This was a cool piece of logic that was hardly to my taste.

"Tell me," said I, fondling her hand, "how you managed last night?"

"I do not like to think of it," she answered. "I was obliged to undress, for it is ma'm'selle's rule to look into all the bedrooms the last thing after locking the house up. It was then ten o'clock. I waited until I heard the convent clock strike twelve, by which time I supposed everybody would be sound asleep. Then I lighted a candle and dressed myself; but I had to use my hands as softly as a spider spins its web, and my heart seemed to beat so loud that I was afraid the girls in the next room would hear it. I put a box of matches in my pocket, and crept along the corridors to the big *salle-a-manger*. The door of my bedroom creaked when I opened it, and I felt as if I must sink to the ground with fright. The *salle-a-manger* is a great gloomy room even in the daytime; it was dreadfully dark, horribly black, Herbert, and the sight of the stars shining through the window over the balcony made me feel so lonely that I could have cried. There was a mouse scratching in the room somewhere, and I got upon a chair, scarcely caring whether I made a noise or not, so frightened was I, for I hate mice. Indeed, if that mouse had not kept quiet after awhile, I believe I should not be here now. I could not endure being alone in a great, dark room at that fearful hour of the night with a mouse running about near me. Oh, Herbert, how glad I was when I saw your lantern flash!"

"My brave little heart!" cried I, snatching up her hand and kissing it. "But the worst part is over. There are no ladders, no great, black rooms, now before us—no mice, even."

She slightly colored, without smiling, and I noticed an anxious expression in the young eyes she had steadfastly bent upon the table.

"What thought is troubling you, Grace?"

"Herbert, I fear you will not love me the better for consenting to run away with you."

"Is that your only fear?"

She shook her head, and said, while she continued to keep her eyes downcast, "Suppose Aunt Amelia refuses to sanction our marriage?"

"She will not! she dare not!" I cried, vehemently. "Imprudent as we may seem, we are polite in this, Grace—that our adventure must force your aunt into sending us her sanction." She looked at me, but her face remained grave. "Caudel," said I, "who is as much your guardian as I am, put the same question to me. But there is no earthly good in supposing. It is monstrous to suppose that your aunt will object. She hates me, I know, but her aversion—the aversion of that old woman of the world, with her family pride and notions of propriety—is not going to suffer her to forbid our marriage after this. Yet, grant that her ladyship—my blessings upon her false front!—should go on saying no; are we not prepared?"

A MARRIAGE AT SEA.

5

I kissed away a tear, and a little later she was smiling, with her hand in mine, as I led her up on deck.

She gazed about her out of the wraps which rose to her ears, with eyes full of child-like interest and wonder, not unmixed with fear. I saw her eagerly watching the action of the yacht as the little fabric leaned to a sea with a long, sideways, floating plunge, that brought the yeast of the broken waters bubbling and hissing to the very line of her lee fore-castle bulwark; then she would clasp my hand, as though startled, when the dandy craft swept the weight of her white canvas to windward on the heave of the under-running sea, with a sound as of drums and bugles heard afar echoing down out of the glistening concavities, and ringing out of the taut rigging upon which the blue and brilliant morning breeze was splitting.

She had not been sitting long before I saw that she was beginning to like it. There was no nausea now; her eyes were bright; there was color in her cheeks, and her red lips lay parted as though in pure enjoyment of the glad rush of the salt breeze athwart her teeth of pearl.

Thus passed the morning. There was no tedium. If ever there came a halt in our chat, there were twenty things over the side to look at, to fill the pause with color and beauty. It might be a tall, slate-colored steam tank, hideous with gaunt, leaning funnel and famished pole-masts, and black fans of propeller beating at the stern-post, like the vanes of a drowning windmill amid a hill of froth, yet poetized in spite of herself into a pretty detail of the surrounding life, through the mere impulse and spirit of the bright seas through which she was starkly driving. Or it was a full-rigged ship, homeward bound, with yearning canvas and ocean worn sides, figures on her poop crossing from rail to rail to look at what was passing, and seamen on her fore-castle busy with the ground-tackle.

It was shortly after twelve that the delicate shadow of the high land of Beachy Head showed over the yacht's bow. By one o'clock it had grown defined and firm, with the glimmering streak of its white ramparts of chalk stealing out of the blue haze.

"There's old England, Grace," said I. "How one's heart goes out to the sight of the merest shadow of one's own soil! The Spitfire has seen the land; has she not suddenly quickened her pace?"

"I ought to wish it was the Cornwall coast," she answered; "but I am enjoying this now," she added, smiling.

I was made happy by finding my sweetheart with some appetite for dinner at one o'clock. She no longer sighed; no regrets escaped her; her early alarm had disappeared; the novelty of the situation was wearing off; she was now realizing again what I knew she had realized before—to judge by her letters—though the excitement and terrors of the elopement had broken in upon and temporarily disordered her perception; she was fully realizing, I mean, that there had been nothing for it but this step to free her from a species of immurement charged with menace to her faith and to her love; and this being her mood, her affection for me loved room to show itself, so that now I never could meet her eyes without seeing how wholly I had her dear heart, and how happy she was in this recurrence and brightening out of her love from the gloom and consternation that attended the start of our headlong, wild adventure.

I flattered myself that we were to be fortunate in our weather. Certainly all that afternoon was as fair and beautiful in its marine atmosphere of autumn as living creature could desire. The blues and greens of the prospect of heaven and sea were enriched by the looming, towering terraces of Beachy Head, hanging large and looking near upon our starboard quarter, though I believe Caudel had not sailed very deep within the sphere in which the high-perched lantern is visible before shifting his helm for a straight down Channel course.

When the sun had fairly set I took her below, for the wind seemed to come on a sudden with the damp of night in it, and a bite as shrewd in its abruptness as frost. I had made no other provision, in the shape of amusement, for our sea trip of three, four or five days, as it might happen, than a small parcel of novels, scarcely doubting that all the diversion we should need must lie in each other's company. And, in fact, we managed to kill the time very agreeably without the help of fiction, though we both owned when the little cabin clock pointed to half past nine and she, looking up at it, yawning behind her white fingers, exclaimed that she felt tired and would go to bed—I say, we both owned that the day had seemed a desperately long one—to be sure, with us it had begun very early—and I could not help adding that, on the whole, a honeymoon spent aboard a yacht the size of the Spitfire would soon become a very slow business.

When she had withdrawn, I put on a pea-coat, and filling a pipe, stepped on deck. The dusk was clear, but of a darker shade than that of the preceding night; there was not more wind than had been blowing throughout the day, but the sky was full of large, swollen clouds rolling in shadows of giant wings athwart the stars, and the gloom of them was in the atmosphere. Here and there showed a ship's light—some faint gleam of red or green windily coming and going out upon the weltering obscurity—at away to starboard the horizon ran through black, without a single streak of shore light that I could see. The yacht was swarming through it under all canvas, humming as she went. Her pace, if it lasted, would, I knew, speedily terminate this sea-going passage of our

elopement, and I looked over the stern very well pleased to witness the arrow-straight white of the wake melting at a little distance into a mere elusive faintness.

Caudel stood near the helm.

"When are we to be off St. Catherine's Point at this pace, Caudel?" said I.

"At this pace, sir? Why, betwixt seven and eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"What a deuce of a length this English Channel runs to!" cried I, impatiently. "Why, it will be little better than beginning our voyage, even when the Isle of Wight is abreast!"

"Yes, sir, there's a deal o' water going to the making of this here Channel—a blooming sight too much of it when it comes on a winter's night ablowing and a-snowing, the atmosphere as thick as muck," answered Caudel.

"There'll be a bright lookout kept to-night, I hope," said I. "Not the value of all the cargoes afloat at this present instant, Caudel, the wide world over, equals the worth of my treasure aboard the Spitfire."

"Trust me to see that a bright lookout's kept, Mr. Barclay. There'll be no tarning in with me this night. Don't let no fear of anything going wrong disturb your mind, sir."

I lingered to finish my pipe. The fresh wind flashed into my face damp with the night and the spray-cold breath of the sea, and the planks of the deck showed dark with the moisture to the dim starlight. There was some weight in the heads of seas as they came rolling to our beam, and the little vessel was soaring and falling briskly upon the heave of the folds, whose volume of course gained as the Channel broadened.

"Well," said I, with a bit of a shiver, and hugging myself in my pea-coat, "I am cold and tired, and going to bed; so good night, and God keep you wide awake." And down I went, and ten minutes later was snuggled away in my coffin of a bunk, sound asleep, and snoring at the top of my pipes, I don't doubt.

Next morning, when I went on deck after nine hours of solid slumber, I at once directed my eyes over the rail in search of the Isle of Wight, but there was nothing to be seen but a gray drizzle, a weeping wall of slate-colored haze that formed a sky of its own, and drooped to within a mile or so of the yacht. The sea was an ugly sallowish green, and you saw the billows come tumbling in froth from under the vaporous margin of the horizon as though each surge was formed there and there was nothing but blankness and space beyond. The yacht's canvas was discolored with saturation, drops of water were blowing from her rigging, there was a sobbing of a gutter-like sort in her lee scuppers, and the figures of the men glistening in oil-skins completed the melancholy appearance of the little Spitfire. Caudel was below, but the man named Dick Files was at the helm—an intelligent young fellow without any portion of Job Crew's surliness, and he answered the questions I put.

We had made capital way throughout the night, he told me, and if the weather were clear, St. Catherine's Point would show abreast of us.

"There's no doubt about Caudel knowing where he is?" said I, with a glance at the blind gray atmosphere that sometimes swept in little puffs of cloudy damp through the rigging like fragments of vapor torn out of some compacted body.

"Oh, no, sir; Mr. Caudel knows where he is," answered the man. "We picked up and passed a small cutter out of Portsmouth about three-quarters of an hour ago, sir, and he told us where we were."

"Has this sail been kept on the yacht all night?" said I, looking at the wide spread of mainsail and gaff topsail.

"All night, sir. The run's averaged eight knots. Nigh hand equal to steam, sir."

"Well, you all need to keep a bright lookout in this sort of thickness. How far off can you see?"

The man stared and blinked and mused, and then said he allowed about a mile and a quarter.

"Room enough," said I. "But mind your big mail boats out of Southampton. There are German skippers among them who would drive through the devil himself rather than lose five minutes."

The promise of a long, wet, blank day was not very cheering. In fact, this change in the weather was as dampening to my spirits as it literally was to everything else, and as I entered the companion-way for shelter I felt as though half of a mind to order the yacht to be headed for some adjacent port. But a little thinking brought back my resolution to its old bearings. It was a hard thing to avow, but I knew that my very strongest chance of gaining Lady Amelia's consent lay in this sea-trip. Then, again, there might come a break at any minute, with a fine day of warm sunshine and clear sky to follow. I re-entered the cabin, and on looking at the barometer observed a slight depression in the mercury, but it was without significance to my mind.

Somewhere about this time Grace came out of her berth. She brought an atmosphere of flower-like fragrance with her, but the motions of the yacht obliged her to sit quickly, and she gazed at me with laughter in her eyes from the locker, graceful in her posture as a reposing dancer. Her face lengthened, however, when I told her about the weather—that in short there was nothing visible from the deck but a muddy, jumbled atmosphere of vapor and drizzle.

"I counted upon seeing the Isle of Wight," cried she. "There has been no land so far except those far-off high cliffs yesterday afternoon."

"No matter, my sweet. Let us take as long as

possible in breakfasting. Then you shall read Tennyson to me—yes, I have a volume of that poet—and we shall find some of the verses in wonderful harmony with our mood." She gave me a smiling glance, though her lip pouted, as if she would say, "Don't make too sure of my mood, my fine young fellow." "By the time we have done with Tennyson," I continued, "the weather may have cleared. If not, then we must take as long as possible in dining."

"Isn't it dangerous to be at sea in such weather as this?" she asked.

"No," said I.

"But the sailors can't see."

I feared the drift of her language and explained. "It would be dangerous to attempt to make the land, for we might blunder upon a rock and go to pieces, Grace; and then farewell, a long farewell to the passions, the emotions, the impulses, the sensations, which have brought us together here." And I kissed her hand.

"But it would be pleasant to lie in a pretty harbor—to rest, as it were," she exclaimed.

"Our business is to get married, my darling," I rejoined, "and we must hasten as swiftly as the wind will allow us to the parish where the ceremony is to be performed; for my cousin can't publish the bans until we are on the spot, and while he is publishing the bans we must be treating with her ladyship, and as the diplomatists would say, negotiating a successful issue."

I should only weary you by reciting the passage of the hours. After breakfast I took her on deck for a turn; but she was glad to get below again. All day long it continued dark weather, without a sight of anything save at intervals the shadowy figure of a coaster aslant in the thickness, and once the loom of a huge ocean passenger boat, sweeping at twelve or fourteen knots through the gray veil of vapor that narrowed the horizon to within a mile of us. The wind, however, remained a steady fresh breeze, and throughout the day there was never a rope handled nor a stitch of canvas reduced. The Spitfire swung steadfastly through it, in true sea-bruising style, sturdily flinging the sea off her flaring bow, and whitening the water with the plunges of her churning keel till the tail of her wake seemed to stretch to the near sea-line.

IV.

I WILL not feign, however, that I was perfectly comfortable in my mind. Anything at sea but thick weather! I never pretended to be more than a summer-holiday sailor, and such anxiety as I should have felt had I been alone was now mightily accentuated, as may be supposed, by having the darling of my heart in my little ship with me. I had a long talk with Caudel that afternoon, and, despite my eager desire to remain at sea, I believe I would have been glad had he advised that the Spitfire should be steered for the nearest harbor. But his counsel was all the other way.

"Lord love ye, Mr. Barclay, sir," he exclaimed, "what's going wrong, that we should tarn to and set it right? Here's a breeze of wind that's doing all that could be asked for. I don't say it ain't thick, but there's nothin' in it to take notice of. Of course you've only got to say the word, sir, and I'll put the helm up; but even for that there job it would be proper to make sartin first of all where we are. There's no want of harbors under our lee, from Portland Bill to Bolt Head, but I can't trust to my dead reckoning, seeing what's involved," said he, casting a damp eye at the skylight, "and my motto is, there's nothin' like seeing when you're on such a coast as this here. Having come all this way, it 'ud be a pity to stop now."

"So long as you're satisfied—" I exclaimed; and no doubt he was, though I believe he was influenced by vanity, too. Our putting into a harbor might affect him as a reflection upon his skill. He would also suppose that if we entered harbor we should travel by rail to our destination—which would be as though he were told we could not trust him further. After the service he had done me, it was not to be supposed I could causelessly give the fellow offense.

"You steer by the compass, I suppose?" said I.

"By nothin' else, sir," he answered, in a voice of wonder.

"Well, I might have known that," said I, laughing at my own stupid question, that yet had sense in it too. "I should have asked you if the compass is to be trusted."

"Ay, sir. He's a first-class compass. There's nothing to make him go wrong. Yet it's astonishing what a little thing will put a compass out. I've heered of a vessel that was pretty high run ashore all along of the helmsman—not because he couldn't steer; a better hand never stood at a wheel; but because he'd been physickin' himself with iron and steel, and had taken so much of the blooming stuff that the compass was wrong all the time he was at the helm."

"A very good story," said I.

"I'm sure you'll forgive me, sir," he proceeded, "for asking if your young lady wears any steel bones about her—contrivances for hoisting her dress up astern—crinolines—bustles—you know what I mean, Mr. Barclay?"

"I cannot tell," said I.

"I've heered speak of the master of a vessel," he went on (being a very talkative man when he got into the "yarning" mood), "whose calculations was always falling to pieces at sea. Two and two never seemed to make four with him, until he found out that one of his lady passengers every morning

brought a stool and sat close ag'in the binnacle; she wore steel hoops to swell her dress out with, and the local attraction was such, your honor, that the compass was sometimes four or five points out."

I told him that if the compass went wrong it would not be Miss Bellassy's fault, and, having had enough of the deck, I rejoined my sweetheart; and in the cabin, with talking, reading, she singing—very sweetly she sung—we killed the hours till bedtime.

This was our third night at sea, and I was now beginning to think that instead of three or four days we should occupy a week, and perhaps longer, in making Mount's Bay—in which conjecture I was confirmed when, finding myself awake at three o'clock in the morning, I pulled on my clothes and went on deck to take a look round, and found the wind a light off-shore air, the stars shining, and the Spitfire, with her canvas falling in and out with sounds like the discharge of small arms, rolling stagnantly upon a smooth backed run of swell lifting out of the northeast, but with a slant in the heave of it that made one guess the impulse which set it running was fair north.

I was up again at seven o'clock, with a resolution to let the weather shape my decision as to sticking to the vessel or going ashore, and was not a little pleased to find the yacht making good way, with a brilliant breeze gushing steady off her starboard bow. The heavens looked high, with fine weather clouds, prismatic mare-tails for the most part, here and there a snow white swelling vapor hovering over the edge of the sea.

The greater part of this day Grace and I spent on deck, but nothing whatever happened good enough to keep my tale waiting while I tell you about it. Strong as the off-shore breeze was, there was but little sea, nothing to stop the yacht, and she ran through it like a sledge over a snow-plain, piling the froth to her stem-head and reeling off a fair nine knots, as Candel would cry out to me with an exultant countenance of leather every time the log was hove. He talked of being abreast of the Start by three o'clock in the morning.

"Then," said I to my sweetheart, "if that be so, Grace, there will be but a short cruise to follow."

At this she looked grave, and fastened her eyes with a wistful expression upon the seas over the bows, as though Mount's Bay lay there, and the quaint old town of Penzance with its long esplanade and its rich flanking of green and well-tilled heights would be presently showing.

I read her thoughts, and said, "I have never met Mrs. Howe; but Frank's letters about her to me were as enthusiastic as mine were about you to him. He calls her sweetly pretty: so she may be. I know she is a lady; but her connections are good; I am also convinced by Frank's description that she is amiable; consequently I am certain she will make you happy and comfortable until—" And here I squeezed her hand.

"It is a desperate step, Herbert," she sighed. Upon which I changed the subject.

We went below, and Grace and I killed the time, as heretofore, in talking and reading. We found the evening too short, indeed, so much had we to say to each other. Wonderful is the amount of talk which lovers are able to get through and feel satisfied with. You hear of silent love, of lovers staring on each other with glowing eyes, their lips incapable of expressing the emotions and sensations which crowd their quick hearts and fill their throats with sighs. This may be very well, too, but for my part I have generally observed that lovers have a very great deal to talk about. Remark an engaged couple: sooner than be silent they will whisper if there be company at hand; and when alone, or when they think themselves alone, their tongues—particularly the girls'—are never still. Grace and I were of a talking age—two-and-twenty, and one not yet eighteen; our minds had no knowledge of life, no experience, nothing in them to keep them steady; they were set in motion by the lightest, the most trivial breath of thought, and idly danced in us in the manner of some gossamer-like topmost leaf to the faintest movement of the summer air.

She withdrew to her berth at ten o'clock that night with a radiant face and laughing eyes, for, insipid as the evening must have proved to others, to us it had been one of perfect felicity. Not a single sigh had escaped her, and twice had I mentioned the name of Mrs. Howe without witnessing any change of countenance in her.

I went on deck to take a last look round, and found all well—no change in the weather, the breeze a brisk and steady pouring out of the north, and Candel pacing the deck well satisfied with our progress. I returned below without any feeling of uneasiness, and sat at the cabin table for some minutes or so to smoke a cigar and to refresh myself with a glass of seltzer and brandy. A sort of dream-like feeling came upon me as I sat. I found it hard to realize that my sweetheart was close to me, separated only by a curtained door from the cabin I was musing in. What was to follow this adventure? Was it possible that Lady Amelia Roscoe could oppose any obstacle to our union after this association? I gazed at the mirrors I had equipped the cabin with, picked up a handkerchief my sweetheart had left behind her and kissed it, stared at the little silver shining lamp that swung over my head, pulled a flower and smelt it in a vacant sort of way of which nevertheless I was perfectly sensible. "Is there anything wrong with my nerves to-night?" thought I.

I extinguished my cigar and went to bed. It was

then about a quarter to eleven, and till past one I lay awake, weary, yet unable to sleep. I lay listening to the frothing and seething of the water thrashing along the bends, broken into at regular intervals by the low thunder of the surge burying my cabin port-hole and rising to the line of the rail as the yacht's stern sunk with a long slanting heel over of the whole fabric. I feel asleep at last, and, as I afterward gathered, slept till somewhat after three o'clock in the morning.

I was awakened by suddenly and violently rolling out of my bunk. The fall was a heavy one; I was a big fellow, and struck the plank of the deck hard, and, though I was instantly awakened by the shock of the capsize, I lay for some moments in a condition of stupefaction, sensible of nothing but that I had tumbled out of my bunk.

The little berth was in pitch darkness, and I lay, as I have said, motionless, and almost dazed, till my ear caught a sound of shrieking ringing through a wild but subdued note of storm on deck, mingled with loud and fearful shouts as of men bawling for life or death, with a trembling in every plank and fastening of the little fabric as though she were tearing herself to pieces. I got on to my legs, but the angle of the deck was so prodigious that I leaned helpless against the bulkhead to the base of which I had rolled, though unconsciously. The shrieks were continued. I recognized Grace's voice, and the sound put a sort of frenzy into me, inasmuch that, scarcely knowing how I managed, I had in an instant opened the door of my little berth, and was standing grabbing hold of the cabin table, shouting to let her know that I was awake and up and that I had heard her.

Now the uproar of what I took to be a squall of hurricane power was to be easily heard. The bellying of the wind was horrible, and it was made more terrifying to land going ears by the incessant hoarse shouts of the fellows on deck; but, bewildered as I was, agitated beyond expression, not knowing but that as I stood there gripping the table and shouting my sweetheart's name the yacht might be foundering under my feet, I had wits enough to observe that the vessel was slowly recovering a level keel, rising from the roof-like slant which had flung me from my bed to an inclination that rendered the use of one's legs possible. I likewise noticed that she neither plunged nor rolled with greater heaviness than I had observed in her before I lay down. The sensation of her motion was as though she was slowly rounding before the wind and beginning to fly over a surface that had been almost flattened by a hurricane-burst into a dead level of snow. I could hear no noise of breaking seas nor of rushing water—nothing but a coldron-like hissing through which rolled the notes of the storm in echoes of great ordnance.

Fortunately, I had no need to clothe myself, since on lying down I had removed nothing but my coat, collar and shoes. I had a little silver match-box in my trousers pocket, and swiftly struck a match and lighted the lamp. I looked at Grace's door, expecting to find her standing in it. It was closed, and she continued to scream. It was no time for ceremony; I opened the door and called to her.

"Oh, Herbert, save me!" she cried. "The yacht is sinking!"

"No," I cried, "she has been struck by a gale of wind. I will find out what is the matter. Are you hurt?"

"The yacht is sinking!" she repeated, in a wild voice of terror.

Spite of the lamp-light in the cabin, the curtain and the door combined eclipsed the sheen, and I could not see her.

"Are you in bed, dearest?"

"Yes," she moaned.

"Are you hurt, my precious?"

"No; but my heart has stopped with fright. We shall be drowned! Oh, Herbert, the yacht is sinking!"

"Remain as you are, Grace. I shall return to you in a moment. Do not imagine that the yacht is sinking. I know by the buoyant feel of her movements that she is safe."

And, thus hurriedly speaking, I left her, satisfied that her shrieks had been produced by terror only; nor did I wish her to rise, lest the yacht should again suddenly heel to her first extravagantly dreadful angle, and throw her and break a limb or injure her more cruelly yet.

The companion-hatch was closed. The idea of being imprisoned raised such a feeling of consternation in me that I stood in the hatch as one paralyzed: then terror set me pounding upon the cover with my fists till you would have thought that in a few moments I must have reduced it to splinters. After a little while, during which I hammered with might and main, roaring out the name of Candel, the cover was cautiously lifted a few inches, letting in a very yell of wind, such a shock and blast of it that I was forced back off the ladder as by a blow in the face, and in a breath the light went out.

"It's all right, Mr. Barclay," cried the voice of Candel, hoarse and yet shrill too with the life-and-death cries he had been already delivering. "A gale of wind's busted down upon us. We've got the yacht afore it while we clear away the wreckage. There's no call to be alarmed, sir. On my word and honor as a man, there's no call, sir. I beg you not to come on deck yet; ye'll only be in the way. Trust to me, sir; it's all right, I say." And the hatch was closed again.

I now knocked on Grace's door, and told her to rise and dress herself and join me in the cabin.

"There is no danger," I shouted; "nothing but a capful of wind."

She made some answer which I could not catch, but I might be sure that the upright posture and buoyant motions of the scudding yacht had tranquilized her mind.

I sat alone for some ten minutes, during which the height and volume of the sea sensibly increased, though as the yacht continued flying dead before the wind her plunges were still too long and gradual to be distressing. Occasionally a shout would sound on deck, but what the men were about I could not conceive.

The door of the forward berth was opened, and Grace entered the cabin. Her face was white as death; her large eyes, which seemed of a coal blackness in the lamp-light, and by contrast with the hue of her cheeks, sparkled with alarm. She swept them round the cabin as though she expected to behold one knows not what sort of horror, then came to my side and linked my arm tightly in hers. "Oh, Herbert, tell me the truth. What has happened?"

"Nothing serious, darling. Do not you feel that we are afloat and sailing bravely?"

"But just now? Did not the yacht turn over? Something was broken on deck, and the men began to shriek?"

"And so did you, Grace," said I, trying to smile.

"But if we should be drowned!" she cried, drawing herself closer to me and fastening her sweet, terrified eyes upon my face.

I shook my head, still preserving my smile, though Heaven knows, had my countenance taken its expression from my mood it must have shown as long as the yacht herself. I could observe her straining her ears to listen, while her gaze—large, bright, her brows arched, her lips parted, her breast swiftly heaving—roamed over the cabin.

"What is that noise of thunder, Herbert?"

"It is the wind," I answered.

"Are not the waves getting up? Oh, feel this!" she cried, as the yacht rose with velocity and something of violence to the under-running hurl of a chasing sea, of a power that was but too suggestive of what we were to expect.

"The Spitfire is a stanch, noble little craft," said I, "built for North Sea weather. She is not to be daunted by anything that can happen hereabouts."

"But what has happened?" she cried, irritable with alarm.

I was about to utter the first reassuring sentence that occurred to my mind, when the hatch-cover was slid a little way back, and I just caught sight of a pair of legs ere the cabin lamp was extinguished by such another yell and blast of wind as had before nearly stretched me. Grace shrieked and threw her arms round my neck; the cover was closed, and the interior instantly became again.

"Who's that?" I roared.

"Me, sir," sounded a voice out of the blackness where the companion-steps stood—"Files, sir. The captain's asked me to step below to report what's happened. He durstn't leave the deck himself."

I released myself from my darling's clinging embrace and lighted the lamp for the third time.

Files, wrapped in streaming oil-skins, resembled an ebony figure over which a bucket of dripping has been emptied, as he stood at the foot of the steps with but a bit of his wet, gray-colored face showing betwixt the ear-flaps and under the fore-thatch of his sou'-wester.

"Now for your report, Files; and bear a hand with it, for mercy's sake."

"Well, sir, it's just this: it had been breezing up, and we double-reefed the main-sail, Captain Candel not liking the look of the weather, when a slap of wind carried pretty nigh half the mast over the side. We reckon—for we can't see—that it's gone some three or four feet below the cross-trees. The sail came down with a run, and there was a regular mess of it, sir, the vessel being buried. We've had to keep her afore it until we could cut the wreckage clear, and now we're a-going to heave her to, and I'm to take ye, with Captain Candel's compliments, not to tell any notice of the capers she may cut when she heads the sea."

"How does the weather look, Files?"

"Werry black and noisy, sir."

"Tell Candel to let me see him whenever he can leave the deck," said I, unwilling to detain him, lest he should say something to add to the terror of Grace, whose eyes were riveted upon him as though he were some frightful ghost or hideous messenger of death.

I took down the lamp and screened it while he opened the cover and crawled out. No man could imagine that so heavy a sea was already running until Candel hove the yacht to. The instant the helm was put down the dance began. As she rounded to a whole green sea struck her full abeam, and fell with a roar like a volcanic discharge upon her decks, staggering her to the heart—sending a thrice of mortal agony through her, as one might have sworn. I felt that she was buried in the foam of that sea. As she gallantly rose, still valiantly rounding into the wind, as though the spirit of the British soil in which had grown the hardy timber out of which she was manufactured was never stronger in her than now, the water that filled her decks roared cascading over her rails.

Grace sat at my side, her arms locked in mine; she was motionless with fear; her eyes had the fixed look of the sleep walkers. Nor will I deny that my own terror was extreme, for imagining that I had heard a shriek, I believed that my men had been washed overboard and that we two were locked up in a dismantled craft that was probably sinking—imprisoned, I say, by reason of the construction

of the companion-cover, which when closed was not to be opened from within.

I waited a few minutes with my lips set, wondering what was to happen next, holding Grace close to me, and hearkening with feverish ears for the least sound of a human voice on deck. There was a second blow—this time on the yacht's bow—followed by a sensation as of every timber thrilling, and by a bolt-like thud of falling water, but well forward. Immediately afterward I heard Caudel shouting close against the skylight, and I cannot express the emotion—in truth, I may call it the transport of joy—his voice raised in me. It was like being rescued from a dreadful death that an instant before seemed certain.

I continued to wait, holding my darling to me; her head lay upon my shoulder, and she rested as though in a swoon. The sight of her white face was inexpressibly shocking to me, who very well knew that there was nothing I could say to soften her terrors amid such a sea as the yacht was now tumbling upon. Indeed, the vessel's motion had become on a sudden violently heavy. I was never in such a sea before, that is to say, in so small a vessel—and the leaping of the craft from peak to base, and the dreadful careening of her as she soared, lying down on her beam-ends, to the next liquid summit, were absolutely soul-sickening.

Well, some twenty minutes or perhaps half an hour passed, during all which time I believed every moment to be our last, and I recollect cursing myself for being the instrument of introducing the darling of my heart into this abominable scene of storm, in which, as I believed, we were both to perish. Why had I not gone ashore yesterday? Did not my instincts advise me to quit the sea and take to the railway? Why had I brought my pet away from the security of the Rue de Maquette? Why, in the name of all the virtues, was I so impatient that I could not wait till she was of age, when I could have married her comfortably and respectfully, freed from all obligation of ladders, dark lanterns, tempests, and whatever was next to come? I could have beaten my head upon the table. Never did I better understand what I have always regarded as a stroke of fiction—I mean the disposition of a man in a passion to tear out his hair by the roots.

At the expiration, as I supposed, of twenty minutes, the hatch-cover was opened, this time without any following screech and blast of wind, and Caudel descended. Had he been a beam of sunshine he could not have been more welcome to my eye. He was clad from head to foot in oil-skins, from which the wet ran as from an umbrella in a thunder-shower, and the skin and hue of his face resembled soaked leather.

"Well, Mr. Barclay, sir," he exclaimed, "and how have you been a-getting on? It's been a bad job; but there's nothin' to alarm ye, I'm sure." Then, catching sight of Grace's face, he cried, "The young lady ain't been hurt herself, I hope, sir."

"Her fear and this movement," I answered, "have proved too much for her. I wish you would pull off your oil-skins and help me to convey her to the side there. The edge of this table seems to be cutting me in halves"—the fact being that I was to windward, with the whole weight of my sweetheart, who rested lifelessly against me, to increase the pressure, so that at every leeward stoop of the craft my breast was caught by the edge of the table with a sensation as of a knife cutting through my shirt.

He instantly whipped off his streaming water-proofs, standing without the least inconvenience while the deck slanted under him like a seasaw, and in a very few moments he had safely placed Grace on the lee locker, with her head on a pillow. I made shift to get round to her without hurting myself, then cried to Caudel to sit and tell me what had happened.

"Well, it's just this, sir," he answered: "the mast was carried away some feet below the head off. It went on a sudden in the squall in which the wind burst down upon us. Perhaps it was well it happened for she lay down to that there houtly in a way so inordinate that I did believe she'd never lift herself out of the water ag'in. But the sail came down when the mast broke, and I managed to get her afore it, though I don't mind owning to you no, sir, that what with the gear fouling the helm, and what with other matters which there ain't no call for me to talk about, 'twas as close a shave with us, sir, as ever happened at sea."

"Is the yacht tight, do you think, Caudel?" cried I.

"I hope she is, sir."

"Hope! My God! but you must *know*, Caudel!" "Well, sir, she's a-draining a little water into her—I'm bound to say it—but nothin' that the pump won't keep under and I believe that most of it finds its way into the well from up above."

I stared at him with a passion of anxiety and dismay, but his cheery blue eyes steadfastly returned my gaze, as though he would make me know that he spoke the truth—that matters were not worse than he represented them as being.

"Has the pump been worked?" I inquired.

He lifted his fingers as I asked the question, and I could hear the beat of the pump throbbing through the dull roar of the wind, as though a man had seized the brake of it in response to my inquiry.

"Was any one hurt by the sea as you rounded to?" "Bobby was washed aft, sir, but he's all right ag'in."

I piled him with further questions, mainly concerning the prospects of the weather, our chances, the drift of the yacht, that I might know in what part of the Channel we were being blown, and how long would "occupy to storm us at this rate into

the open Atlantic; and then, asking him to watch by Grace for a few minutes, I dropped on my knees and crawled to my cabin, where I somehow contrived to scramble into my boots, coat, and cap. I then made for the companion-steps, still on my knees, and clawed my way up the hatch till I was a head and shoulders above it, and there I stood looking.

I say looking; but there was nothing to see, save the near, vast, cloud-like spaces of foam, hovering, as it seemed, high above the rail, or descending the pouring side of a sea like bodies of mist sweeping with incredible velocity with the breath of the gale. Past these dim masses the water lay in blackness—a huge spread of throbbing obscurity. All overhead was mere rushing darkness. The wind was wet with spray, and forward there would show at intervals a dull shining of foam, flashing transversely across the laboring little craft.

It was blowing hard indeed, yet from the weight of the seas and the motion of the Spitfire I could have supposed the gale severer than it was. I returned to the cabin; and Caudel, after putting on his oil-skins and swallowing a glass of brandy and water—the materials for which were swaying furiously in a silver-plated swinging tray suspended over the table—went on deck, leaving the companion-cover a little way open in case I should desire to quit the cabin.

Until the dawn, and some time past it, I sat close beside Grace, holding her hand or bathing her brow. She never spoke; she seldom opened her eyes, indeed; she lay as though utterly prostrated, without power to articulate or perhaps even to think. It was the effect of fear, however, rather than of nausea. At any rate, I remember hoping so, for I had heard of people dying of seasickness, and if the weather that had stormed down upon us continued it might end in killing her; whereas the daylight, and perhaps some little break of the blue sky, would reanimate her if her sufferings were owing to terror only, and when she found the little craft buoyant and our lives in no danger her spirits would rise and her strength return.

V.

THE blessed daylight came at last. I spied the weak wet gray of it in a corner of the skylight that had been left uncovered by the tarpaulin which was spread over the glass. I looked closely at Grace, and found her asleep. I could not be sure at first, so motionless had she been lying; but when I put my ear close to her mouth the regularity of her respiration convinced me that she was slumbering.

That she should be able to snatch even ten minutes of sleep cheered me. Yet my spirits were very heavy; every bone in me ached with a pain as of rheumatism; though I did not feel sick, my brain seemed to reel, and the sensation of giddiness was hardly less miserable and depressing than nausea itself. I stood up, and with great difficulty caught the brandy as it flew from side to side on the swinging tray and took a dram, and then clawed my way as before to the companion-steps, and opening the cover, got into the hatch and stood looking at the picture of my yacht and the sea.

There was no one at the helm; the tiller was lashed to leeward. The shock I received on observing no one aft, finding the helm abandoned as it seemed to me, I shall never forget. The tiller was the first object I saw as I rose through the hatch, and my instant belief was that all my people had been swept overboard. On looking forward, however, I spied Caudel and the others of the men at work about the mast. I am no sailor and cannot tell you what they were doing, beyond saying that they were securing the mast by affixing tackles and so forth to it. But I had no eyes for them or their work; I could only gaze at my ruined yacht, which at every heave appeared to be pulling herself together as it were for the final plunge. A mass of cordage littered the deck; the head of the mast showed in splinters, while the spar itself looked withered, naked, blasted, as though struck by lightning. The decks were full of water, which was flashed above the rail, where it was instantly swept away by the gale in a smoke of crystals. The black gear wriggled and rose to the wash of the water over the planks like a huddle of eels. A large space of the bulwarks on the port side, abreast of the mast, was smashed level with the deck. The gray sky seemed to hover within musket-shot of us, and it went down to the sea in a slate-colored weeping body of thickness to within a couple of hundred fathoms, while the dark green surges, as they came rolling in foam from out of the windward wall of blackness, looked enormous.

Caudel on seeing me came scrambling to the companion. The salt of the flying wet had dried in the hollows of his eyes, and lay in a sort of white powder there, inasmuch that he was scarcely recognizable. It was impossible to hear him amid that roaring commotion, and I descended the ladder by a step or two to enable him to put his head into the hatch. He tried to look cheerful, but there was a curl in the set of his mouth that neutralized the efforts of his eye. He entered into a nautical explanation of our condition, the terms of which I forgot.

"But how is it with the hull, Caudel?" I inquired.

"Surely this wild tossing must be straining the vessel fearfully. Does she continue to take in water?" "I must not deceive you, sir," he answered; "she *do*. But a short spell at the pump serves to chuck it all out ag'in, and so there's no call for your honor to be uneasy."

He returned to the others, while I, heart-sickened

by the intelligence that the Spitfire had sprung a leak—for *that*, I felt, must be the plain English of Caudel's assurance—continued standing a few moments longer in the hatch, looking around. Ugly wings of vapor, patches and fragments of dirty yellow scud, flew fast, loose and low under the near gray wet stoop of the sky; they made the only break in the firmament of storm. The smother of the weather was thickened yet by the clouds of spray, which rose like bursts of steam from the sides and heads of the sea, making one think of the fierce gusts and guns of the gale as of wolves tearing mouthfuls with sharp teeth from the flanks and backs of the rushing and roaring chase they pursued.

Grace was awake, sitting upright, but in a listless, lolling, helpless posture. I was thankful, however, to find her capable of the exertion even of sitting erect. I crept to her side, and held her to me to cherish and comfort her.

"Oh, this weary, weary motion!" she cried, pressing her hand upon her temples.

"It cannot last much longer, my darling," I said; "the gale is fast blowing itself out, and then we shall have blue skies and smooth water again."

"Can we not land, Herbert?" she asked feebly in my ear, with her cheek upon my shoulder.

"Would to God that were possible within the next five minutes!" I answered.

"Whereabouts are we?"

"I cannot tell exactly; but when this weather breaks we shall find the English coast within easy reach."

"Oh, do not let us wait until we get to Mount's Bay!" she cried.

"My pet, the nearest port will be our port *now*, depend upon it."

The day passed—a day of ceaseless storm, and of such tossing as only a smacksman who has fished in the North Sea in winter could know anything about. The spells at the pump grew more frequent as the hours progressed, and the wearisome beat of the plied brake affected my imagination as though it had been the tolling of our funeral bell. I hardly required Caudel to tell me the condition of the yacht when some time between eight and nine o'clock that night he put his head into the hatch and motioned me to ascend.

"It's my duty to tell ye, Mr. Barclay," he exclaimed, whispering hoarsely into my ear in the comparative shelter of the companion-cover, that Grace might not overhear him, "that the leak's a-gainin' upon us."

I had guessed as much, yet this confirmation of my conjecture affected me as violently as though I had had no previous suspicion of the state of the yacht. I was thunder-struck; I felt the blood forsake my cheeks, and for some moments I could not find my voice.

"You do not mean to tell me, Caudel, that the yacht is actually *sinking*?"

"No, sir. But the pump'll have to be kept continually going if she's to remain afloat. I'm afeared when the mast went over the side that a blow from it started a butt, and the leak's growing worse and worse, consequence of the working of the craft."

"Is it still thick?"

"As mud, sir."

"Why not fire the gun at intervals?" said I, referring to the little brass cannon that stood mounted upon the quarter-deck.

"I'm afeared—" He paused, with a melancholy shake of the head. "Of course, Mr. Barclay," he went on, "if it's your wish, sir—but it'll do no more, I allow, than frighten the lady. 'Tis but a pea-shooter, sir, and the gale's like thunder."

"We are in your hands, Caudel," said I, with a feeling of despair ice-cold at my heart, as I reflected upon the size of our little craft, her crippled and sinking condition, our distance from land, as I felt the terrible weight and power of the seas which were tossing us, as I thought of my sweetheart.

"Mr. Barclay," he answered, "if the weather do but moderate I shall have no fear. Our case ain't hopeless yet, by a long way, sir. The water's to be kept under by continuous pumping, and there are hands enough and to spare for that job. We're not in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but in the mouth of the English Channel, with plenty of shipping knocking about. But the weather's got to moderate. Firing that there gun 'ud only be to terrify the young lady and do no good. If a ship came along, no boat could live in this sea. In this here blackness she couldn't keep us company, and our rockets wouldn't be visible half a mile off. No, sir, we've got to stick to the pump and pray for daylight and fine weather." And having no more to say to me, or a sudden emotion checking his utterance, he pulled his head out and disappeared in the obscurity.

Grace asked me what Caudel had been talking about, and I answered, with the utmost composure I could muster, that he had come to tell me the yacht was making a noble fight of it and that there was nothing to cause alarm. I had not the heart to respond otherwise; nor could the bare truth as I understood it have served any other end than to deprive her of her senses. Even now I seemed to find an expression of wildness in her beautiful eyes, as though the tension of her nerves, along with the weary, endless hours of delirious pitching and tossing, was beginning to tell upon her brain. I sought to comfort her; I caressed her; I strained her to my heart, while I exerted my whole soul to look cheerfully and to speak cheerfully, and, thank God! the influence of my true, deep love prevailed; she spoke tranquilly; the brilliant staring look of her

eyes was softened; occasionally she would smile as she lay in my arms, while I rattled on, struggling, with a resolution that now seems preternatural to me when I look back, to distract her attention from our situation.

At one o'clock in the morning she fell asleep, and I knelt by her sleeping form and prayed for mercy and protection.

It was much about this hour that Candel's face again showed in the hatch. I crawled along the deck and up the steps to him, and he immediately said to me, in a voice that trembled with agitation: "Mr. Barclay, good news, sir. The gale's a-taking off."

I clasped my hands, and could have hugged the dripping figure of the man to my breast.

"Yes, sir," he continued, "the breeze is slackening. There's no mistake about it. The horizon's opening, too."

"Heaven be praised! And what of the leak, Candel?"

"Tain't worse than it was, sir; though it's bad enough."

"If the weather should moderate—"

"Well, then, if the leak don't gain we may manage to carry her home. That'll have to be found out, sir. But, seeing the yacht's condition, I shall be for transshipping you and the lady to anything inward bound that may happen to come along. Us men'll take the yacht to port, providing she'll let us." He paused, and then said, "There might be no harm now, perhaps, in firing off that there gun. If a smack 'ud show herself she'd be willing to stand by for the sake of the salvage. We'll also send up a few rockets, sir. But how about the young lady, Mr. Barclay?"

"Everything must be done," I replied, "that is likely to preserve our lives."

There was some gunpowder aboard, but where Candel had stowed it I did not know. However, five minutes after he had left me, and while I was sitting by the side of my sweetheart, who still slept, the gun was discharged. It sent a small shock through the little fabric, as though she had gently touched ground, or had run into some floating object, but the report, blending with the commotion of the sea and the bell-like ringing and wolfish howling of the wind, penetrated the deck in a note so dull that Grace never stirred. Ten or twelve times was this little cannon discharged at intervals of five or ten minutes, and I could hear the occasional rush of a rocket like the sneeze of a giant sounding through the stormy uproar.

From time to time I would creep up in the companion, always in the hope of finding the lights of a ship close to; but nothing came of our rockets, while I doubt if the little blast the quarter-deck pop-gun delivered was audible half a mile away to windward. But, though the night remained a horribly black shadow, the blacker for the phantasmal sheets of foam which defined without illuminating it, the wind about this time—somewhere between four and five o'clock—had greatly moderated. Yet at dawn it was blowing hard still, with an iron-gray freckled sea rolling hollow and confusedly, and a near horizon thick with mist.

There was nothing in sight. The yacht looked deplorably sudden and wrecked as she pitched and wallowed in the cold, desolate, ashen atmosphere of that day-break. The men, too, wore the air of castaway mariners, fagged, salt-whitened, pinched; and their faces—even the boy's—looked aged with anxiety.

I called to Candel. He approached me slowly, as a man might walk after a swim that has nearly spent him.

"Here is another day, Candel. What is to be done?"

"What *can* be done, sir?" answered the poor fellow, with the irritation of exhaustion and of anxiety but little removed from despair. "We must go on pumping for our lives, and pray to God that we may be picked up."

"Why not get sail upon the yacht, put her before the wind, and run for the French coast?"

"If you like, sir," he answered, languidly; "but it's a long stretch to the French coast, and if the wind should shift—" He paused, and looked as though worry had weakened his mind a little and rendered him incapable of deciding swiftly and for the best.

The boy Bobby was pumping, and I took notice of the glassy clearness of the water as it gushed out to the strokes of the little brake. The others of my small crew were crouching under the lee of the weather bulwark.

Before returning to Grace I looked at our little boat—she was just a yacht's dingy—and thought of the slender chance of saving our lives the tiny ark would provide us with—seven souls in a boat fit to hold five, and then only in smooth water!

Grace was awake when I had gone on deck at day-break, though she had slept for two or three hours very soundly, never once moving when the cannon was discharged, frequent as the report had been. On my descending she begged me to take her on deck.

"I shall be able to stand if I hold your arm," she said, "and the air will do me good."

But I had not the heart to let her view the sea, nor the wet, broken, shipwrecked figure the yacht made, with water flying over the bow, and water gushing from the pump, and the foam flashing among the rigging that still littered the deck as the brine roared from side to side.

"No, my darling," said I; "for the present you must keep below. The wind, thank God, is fast

moderating, and the sea will be falling presently. But you cannot imagine, until you attempt to move, how violently the Spitfire rolls and pitches. Besides, the decks are full of water, and a single wild heave might throw us both and send us flying overboard."

She shuddered, and said no more about going on deck. In spite of her having slept, her eyes seemed languid. Her cheeks were colorless, and there was an expression of fear and expectation that made my heart mad to behold in her sweet young face, which, when all was well with her, wore a most delicate bloom, while it was lovely with a sort of perfect repose. I had brought her to this? Before another day had closed, her love for me might have cost her her life! I could not bear to think of it; I could not bear to look at her; and I broke down, burying my face in my hands.

She put her arm round my neck, pressed her cheek to mine, but said nothing until the two or three dry sobs which shook me to my very inmost soul had passed.

"Anxiety and want of sleep have made you ill," she said. "I am sure all will end well, Herbert. The storm, you say, is passing; and then we shall be able to steer for the nearest port. You will not wait now to reach Penzance?"

I shook my head, unable to speak.

"We have both had enough of the sea," she continued, forcing a smile that vanished in the next breath she drew, "but you could not have foretold this storm. And even now, would you have me anywhere else but here?" said she, putting her cheek to mine again. "Rest your head on my shoulder and sleep. I feel better, and will instantly awaken you if there is any occasion to do so."

I was about to make some answer, when I heard a loud, and, as it appeared to me, a fearful cry on deck. Before I could spring to my feet some one heavily thumped the companion-hatch, flinging the sliding cover wide open an instant after, and Candel's voice roared down:

"Mr. Barclay! Mr. Barclay! there's a big ship close aboard us! She's rounding to. Come on deck, for God's sake, sir, that we may learn your wishes."

Bidding Grace remain where she was, I sprang to the companion-steps, and the first thing I saw on emerging was a large, full-rigged ship, with painted ports, under small canvas, and in the act of rounding to, with her main-top-sail yard slowly swinging aback. Midway the height of our little mizzen-mast streamed the ensign, which Candel or another of our men had hoisted, the union down; but our wrecked mast and the fellow laboring at the pump must have told our story to the sight of that ship with an eloquence that could gather but little emphasis from the signal of distress streaming like a square of flame half-mast high at our stern.

It was broad daylight now, with a lightening in the darkness to windward that opened out twice the distance of sea that was to be measured before I went below. The ship, a noble structure, was well within hail, rolling somewhat heavily, but with a majestic slow motion. There was a crowd of sailors on her forecabin staring at us, and I remember even in that supreme moment noticing—so tricky is the human intelligence—how ghastly white the cloths of her top-mast-staysail showed by contrast with the red and blue shirts and other colored apparel of the mob of seamen, and against the spread of dusky sky beyond. There was also a little knot of people on the poop, and a man standing near them, but alone; as I watched him he took what I gathered to be a speaking trumpet from the hand of the young apprentice or ordinary seaman who had run to him with it.

"Now, Mr. Barclay," cried Candel, in a voice vibrating with excitement, "there's yours and the lady's opportunity, sir. But what's your instructions? what's your wishes, sir?"

"My wishes? How can you ask? We must leave the Spitfire. She is already half-drowned. She will sink when you stop pumping."

"Right, sir," he exclaimed; and without another word he posted himself at the rail in a posture of attention, his eyes upon the ship.

She was apparently a vessel bound to some Indian or Australian port, and seemingly full of passengers, for even as I stood watching, the people in twos and threes arrived on the poop or got upon the main-deck bulwark-rail to view us. She was a long iron ship, red beneath the water-line, and the long streak of that color glared out over the foam dissolving at the sides like a flash of crimson sunset as she rolled from us. Whenever she hove her stern up, gay with what might have passed as gilt quarter badges, I could read her name in long, white letters—"CARTHUSIAN—LONDON."

"Yacht ahoy!" now came in a hearty, tempestuous shout through the speaking trumpet which the man I had before noticed lifted to his lips.

"Halloo!" shouted Candel in response.

"What is wrong with you?"

"Wessel's makin' water fast, and ye can see," shrieked Candel, pointing at our wrecked and naked mast, "what our state is. The owner and a lady's aboard, and want to leave the yacht. Will you stand by till you can receive 'em, sir?"

The man with the speaking trumpet elevated his hand, in token that he heard, and appeared to consult with another figure that had drawn to his side. He then took a long look round at the weather, and afterward put the tube again to his mouth.

"Yacht ahoy!"

"Halloo!"

"We will stand by you; but we cannot launch a boat yet. Does the water gain rapidly upon you?"

"The man again elevated his hand, and crossed to the weather side of his ship, to signify, I presume, that there was nothing more to be said.

"In two or three hours, sir, you and the lady'll be safe aboard," cried Candel. "The wind's falling fast, and by that time the sea'll be flat enough for one of that craft's fine boats."

I re-entered the cabin, and found Grace standing, supporting herself at the table. Her attitude was full of expectancy and fear.

"What have they been crying out on deck, Herbert?" she exclaimed.

"There is a big ship close by us, darling," I answered. "The weather is fast moderating, and by noon I hope to have you safe on board of her."

"On board of her?" she cried, with her eyes full of wonder and alarm. "Do you mean to leave the yacht?"

"Yes, I have heart enough to tell you the truth now; she has sprung a leak, and is taking in water rapidly, and we must abandon her."

She dropped upon the locker with her hands clasped.

"Do you tell me she is sinking?"

"We must abandon her," I cried. "Put on your hat and jacket, my darling. The deck is comparatively safe now, and I wish the people on board the ship to see you."

She was so overwhelmed, however, by the news that she appeared incapable of motion. I procured her jacket and hat, and presently helped her to put them on, and then grasping her firmly by the waist, I supported her to the companion-steps and carefully and with difficulty got her on deck, making her sit under the lee of the weather bulwark—where she would be visible enough to the people of the ship at every windward roll of the yacht—and crouched beside her with my arm linked in hers.

VI.

THERE was nothing to do but to wait. Some little trifle of property I had below in the cabin, but nothing that I cared to burden myself with at such a time. All the money I had brought with me, bank-notes and some gold, was in the pocket-book I carried. As for my sweetheart's wardrobe, what she had with her, as you know, she wore, so that she would be leaving nothing behind her. But never can I forget the expression of her face, and the exclamations of horror and astonishment which escaped her lips when, on my seating her under the bulwark, she sent a look at the yacht. The soaked, strained, mutilated appearance of the little craft persuaded her she was sinking even as we sat together looking. At every plunge of the bows she would tremulously suck in her breath and bite upon her under lip, with nervous twitches of her fingers and a recoil of her whole figure against me.

It was some half hour or so after our coming on deck that Candel, quitting the pump, at which he had been taking a spell, approached me and said:

"You'll understand, of course, Mr. Barclay, that I, as master of this yacht, sticks to her?"

"What!" cried I, "to be drowned?"

"I sticks to her, sir," he repeated, with the emphasis of irritability in his manner, that was not at all wanting in respect, either. "I don't mean to say if it should come on to blow another gale afore that there craft," indicating the ship, "receives ye I wouldn't go too. But the weather's a-moderating; it'll be tarning fine afore long, and I'm a-going to sail the Spitfire home."

"I hope, Candel," said I, astonished by this resolution in him, "that you'll not stick to her on my account. Let the wretched craft go, and—" I held the rest behind my teeth.

"No, sir. There'll be nothin' to hurt in the leak if so be as the weather gets better; and it's fast getting better, as you can see. What! let a pretty little dandy craft like the Spitfire go down merely for the want of pumping? All of us men are agreed to stick to her and carry her home."

Grace looked at me; I understood the meaning her eyes conveyed, and exclaimed:

"The men will do as they please. They are plucky fellows, and if they carry the yacht home she shall be sold, and what she fetches divided among them. But I have had enough of her—and more than enough of yachting. I must see you, my pet, safe on board some ship that does not leak."

"I could not live through another night in the Spitfire," she exclaimed.

"No, miss, no," rumbled Candel, soothingly; "nor would it be right and proper that you should be asked to live through it. They'll be sending for ye presently; though, of course, as the vessel's outward bound—here he ran his eyes slowly round the sea—"ye've got to consider that unless she falls in soon with something that'll land you, why, then of course you both stand to have a longer spell of sea-faring than Mr. Barclay and me calculated upon when this here elopement was planned."

"Where is she bound to, I wonder?" said I, viewing the tall, noble vessel with a yearning to be aboard her with Grace at my side.

"To Australia, I allow," answered Candel. "Them passengers ye sees forrards and along the bulwark rail ain't of the sort that goes to Chaney or the Hindles."

"We can't go to Australia, Herbert," said Grace, surveying me with startled eyes.

"My dear Grace, they are plenty of ships betwixt this Channel and Australia—plenty hard by—rolling home and willing to land us for a few sovereigns."

would their steersmen only shift their helm and approach within hail."

But, though there might be truth in this for aught I knew, it was a thing easier to say than to mean, as I felt when I cast my eyes upon the dark green frothing waters still shrouded to within a mile or so past the ship by the damp and dirty gray of the now fast expiring gale that had plunged us into this miserable situation. There was nothing to be seen but the Carthusian rolling solemnly and grandly to windward, and the glancing of white heads of foam arching out of the thickness and running sullenly, but with weight, too, along the course of the wind.

The ship, having canvas upon her, settled slowly upon our bow at a safe distance, but our drift was very nearly hers, and during those weary hours of waiting for the sea to abate the two craft fairly held the relative positions they had occupied at the outset.

The interest we excited in the people aboard of her was ceaseless. The line of her bulwarks remained dark with heads, and the glimmer of the white faces gave an odd pulsing look to the whole length of them as the heave of the ship alternated the stormy light. They believed us on our own report to be sinking, and that might account for their tireless gaze and riveted attention.

On a sudden, much about the hour of noon, there came a lull; the wind dropped as if by magic; here and there over the wide green surface of the ocean the foam glanced, but in the main the billows ceased to break and charged in a troubled but fast moderating swell. A kind of brightness sat in the east, and the horizon opened to its normal confines; but it was a desolate sea—nothing in sight save the ship, though I eagerly and anxiously scanned the whole circle of the waters.

The two vessels had widened their distance, yet the note of the hail, if dull, was perfectly distinct: "Yacht ahoy! We're going to send a boat."

I saw a number of figures in motion on the ship's poop; the aftermost boat was then swung through the davits over the side, four or five men entered her, and a minute later she sunk to the water.

"Here they come, Grace!" cried I. "At last, thank Heaven!"

"Oh, Herbert, I shall never be able to enter her!" she exclaimed, shrinking to my side.

But I knew better, and made answer with a carelessness only.

The masts rose and fell, the boat showed and vanished, showed and vanished again, as she came buzzing to the yacht, to the impulse of the powerfully swept blades. Candel stood by with some coils of line in his hand; the end was flung, caught, and in a trice the boat was alongside, and a sunburned, reddish-haired man in a suit of serge, and with a naval peak to his cap, tumbled with the dexterity of a monkey over the yacht's rail.

He looked round him an instant, and then came straight up to Grace and me, taking the heaving and slanting deck as easily as though it had been the floor of a ball-room.

"I am the second mate of the Carthusian," said he, touching his cap with an expression of astonishment and admiration in his eyes as he looked at Grace. "Are all your people ready to leave, sir? Captain Parsons is anxious that there should be no delay."

"The lady and I are perfectly ready," said I, "but my men have made up their minds to stick to the yacht, with the hope of carrying her home."

He looked around to Candel, who stood near.

"Ay, sir, that's right," said the worthy fellow. "It's a-going to be fine weather, and the water's to be kept under."

The second mate ran his eye over the yacht with a short-lived look of puzzlement in his face, then addressed me:

"We had thought your case a hopeless one, sir."

"So it is," I answered.

"Are you wise in your resolution, my man?" he exclaimed, turning to Candel again.

"Ay, sir," answered Candel, doggedly, as though anticipating an argument. "Who's a-going to leave such a dandy craft as this to founder for the want of keeping a pump going for a day or two? There are four men and a boy all resolved, and we'll manage it," he added, emphatically.

"The yacht is in no fit state for the young lady, any way," said the second mate. "Now, sir, and you, madame, if you are ready." And he put his head over the side to look at his boat.

I helped Grace to stand, and while I supported her I extended my hand to Candel.

"God bless you and send you safe home!" said I. "Your pluck and determination make me feel but half a man. But my mind is resolved too. Not for worlds must Miss Bellassys pass another hour in this craft."

He shook me cordially by the hand, and respectfully bade Grace farewell. The others of my crew approached, leaving one pumping, and among the strong fellows on deck and in the boat—sinewy arms to raise and muscular fists to receive her—Grace, white and shrinking and exclaiming, was handed dexterously and swiftly down over the side. Watching my chance, I sprang, and plumped heavily but safely into the boat. The second mate then followed, and we shoved off.

By this time the light that I had taken notice of in the east had brightened; there were breaks in it, with here and there a dim vein of blue sky, and the waters beneath had a gleam of steel as they rolled frothless and swell-like. In fact, it was easy to see that fine weather was at hand; and this assurance

it was that reconciled me as nothing else could have done to the fancy of Candel and my little crew carrying the leaking, crippled yacht home.

The men in the boat pulled sturdily, eying Grace and me out of the corners of their eyes, and gnawing upon the hunks of tobacco in their cheeks as though in the most literal manner they were chewing the cud of the thoughts put into them by this encounter. The second mate uttered a remark or two about the weather, but the business of the tiller held him too busy to talk. There was the heavy swell to watch, and the tall, slowly rolling, metal fabric ahead of us to steer alongside of. For my part, I could not see how Grace was to get aboard; and, observing no ladder over the side as we rounded under the vessel's stern, I asked the second mate how we were to manage it.

"Oh," said he, "we shall send you both up in a chair with a whip. There's the block," he added, pointing to the yard-arm; "and the line's already rove, you'll observe."

There were some seventy or eighty people watching us as we drew alongside, all staring over the rail, and from the fore-castle, and from the poop, as one man. I remarked a few bonnets and shawled heads forward, and two or three well-dressed women aft; otherwise the crowd of heads belonged to men emigrants, shabby and grimy—most of them looking seasick, I thought, as they overhung the side.

A line was thrown from the ship, and the boat hauled under the yard-arm whip, where she lay rising and falling, carefully fended off from the vessel's iron side by a couple of the men in her.

"Now, then, bear a hand!" shouted a voice from the poop. "Get your gangway unshipped, and stand by to hoist away handsomely."

A minute later a large chair with arms dangled over our heads, and was caught by the fellows in the boat. A more uncomfortable, nerve-capizing performance I never took part in. The water washed with a thundering sobbing sound along the metal bends of the ship, that, as she stooped her sides into the brine, flashed up the swell in froth, hurling toward us also a recoiling billow which made the dance of the boat horribly bewildering and nauseating. One moment we were floated, as it seemed to my eyes, to the level of the bulwarks of the stooping ship; the next we were in a valley, with the great hull leaning away from us—an immense wet surface of red and black and checkered band, her shrouds vanishing in a slope and her yard-arms forking up sky high.

"Now, madame," said the second mate, "will you please seat yourself in that chair?"

Grace was very white, but she saw that it must be done, and with set lips and in silence was helped by the sailors to seat herself. I adored her then for her spirit, for I confess that I had dreaded she would hang back, shriek out, cling to me, and complicate and delay the miserable business by her terrors. She was securely fastened into the chair, and the second mate paused for the chance.

"Hoist away!" he yelled, and up went my darling, uttering one little scream only as she soared.

"Lower away!" and by the line that was attached to the chair she was dragged through the gangway, where I lost sight of her.

It was my turn now. The chair descended, and I seated myself, not without several yearning glances at the sloping side of the ship, which, however, only satisfied me that there was no other method by which I might enter the vessel than the chair, active as I was.

"Hoist away!" was shouted, and up I went, and I shall not readily forget the sensation. My brains seemed to sink into my boots as I mounted. I was hoisted needlessly high—almost to the yard-arm itself, I fancy—through some blunder on the part of the men who manned the whip. For some breathless moments I dangled between heaven and ocean, seeing nothing but gray sky and heaving waters. But the torture was brief. I felt the chair sinking, saw the open gangway sweep past me, and presently I was out of the chair at Grace's side, stared at by some eighty or a hundred emigrants, all 'tween-decks passengers, who had left the bulwarks to congregate on the main deck.

"Will you step this way?" exclaimed a voice overhead.

On looking up, I found we were addressed by a short, somewhat thick-set man who stood at the rail that protected the forward extremity of the poop-deck. This was the person who had talked to us through the speaking trumpet, and I at once guessed him to be the captain. There were about a dozen first-class passengers gazing at us from either of side him, two or three of whom were ladies. I took Grace by the hand and conducted her up a short flight of steps and approached the captain, raising my hat as I did so, and receiving from him a sea-flourish of the tall hat he wore. He was buttoned up in a cloth coat, and his cheeks rested in a pair of high, sharp-pointed collars; starched to an iron hardness, so that his body and head moved as one piece. His short legs arched outward, and his feet were incased in long boots, the toes of which were of the shape of a shovel. He wore the familiar tall hat of the streets; it looked to be brushed the wrong way, was bronzed at the rims, and on the whole showed as a hat that had made several voyages. Yet if there was but little of the sailor in his costume, his face suggested itself to me as a very good example of the nautical life. His nose was little more than a pimple of a reddish tincture, and his small, moist gray eyes, lying deep

in their sockets, seemed as they gazed at you to be boring their way through the apertures which Nature had provided for the admission of light. A short piece of white whisker decorated either cheek, and his hair, that was cropped close as a soldier's, was also white.

"Is that your yacht, young gentleman?" said he, bringing his eyes from Grace to me, at whom he had to stare up as at his mast head, so considerably did I tower over the little man.

"Yes," said I; "she is the Spitfire—belongs to Southampton. I am very much obliged to you for receiving this lady and me."

"Not at all," said he, looking hard at Grace. "Your wife sir?"

"No," said I, greatly embarrassed by the question and by the gaze of the ten or dozen passengers who were near, eying us intently and whispering, yet for the most part with no lack of sympathy and good nature in their countenances. I saw Grace quickly bite upon her under lip, but without coloring or any other sign of confusion than a slight turn of her head, as though she viewed the yacht.

"But what have you done with the rest of your people, young gentleman?" inquired the captain.

"My name is Barclay—Mr. Herbert Barclay; the name of the young lady, to whom I am engaged to be married," said I, significantly, sending a look along the faces of the listeners, "is Miss Grace Bellassys, whose aunt, Lady Amelia Roscoe, you may probably have heard of."

This, I thought, was introduction enough. My business was to assert our dignity first of all, and then, as I was addressing a number of persons who were either English or colonial or both, the pronunciation of her ladyship's name was, I considered, a very early and essential duty.

"With regard to my crew," I continued, and I told the captain they had made up their minds to carry the vessel home.

"Miss Bellassys looks very tired," exclaimed a middle-aged lady, with gray hair, speaking with a gentle, concerned smile engaging with its air of sympathetic apology. "If she will allow me to conduct her to my cabin—"

"By all means, Mrs. Barstow," cried the captain. "If she has been knocking about in that bit of a craft there throughout the gale that's been blowing, all I can say is, she'll have seen more tumbling and weather in forty-eight hours than you'll have any idea of though I was to keep you at sea for ten years in this ship."

Mrs. Barstow with a motherly manner approached Grace, who bowed and thanked her, and together she walked to the companionway-hatch and disappeared.

The captain asked me many questions, many of which I answered mechanically, for my thoughts were fixed upon the little yacht, and my heart was with the poor fellows who had resolved to carry her home—but with them only, not with her. No! as I watched her rolling, and the fellow pumping, not for worlds would I have gone aboard of her again with Grace, though Candel should have yelled out that the leak was stopped, and though a fair, bright, breezy day, with promise of quiet lasting for a week, should have opened round about us.

The captain wanted to know when I had sailed, from what port I had started, where I was bound to, and the like. I kept my gravity with difficulty when I gave him my attention at last. It was not only his own mirth-provoking nautical countenance; the saloon passengers could not take their eyes off my face, and they bobbed and leaned forward in an eager, hearkening way to catch every syllable of my replies. Nor was this all; for below on the quarter-deck and along the waist stood scores of steerage passengers, all straining their eyes at me. The curiosity and excitement were ridiculous. But fame is a thing very cheaply earned in these days.

The captain inquired a little too curiously sometimes. So Miss Bellassys was engaged to be married to me, hey? Was she alone with me? No relative, no maid, nobody of her own sex in attendance, hey? To these questions the ladies listened with an odd expression in their faces. I particularly noticed one of them: she had sausage-shaped curls, lips so thin that when they were closed they formed a fine line as though produced by a single sweep of a camel's-hair brush under her nose; one pupil was considerably larger than the other, which gave her a very staring, knowing look on one side of her face; but there was nothing in my responses to appease her or the captain's or the others' thirst for information.

"There can be no doubt, I hope, Captain Parsons," said I, for the second mate had given me the skipper's name, "of our promptly falling in with something homeward bound that will land Miss Bellassys and me? What the craft may prove will signify nothing; a smack would serve our purpose."

"I'll signal when I have a chance," he answered, looking round the sea and then up aloft; "but it's astonishing, ladies and gentlemen," he continued, addressing the passengers, "how lonesome the ocean is, even where you look for plenty of shipping."

"How far are we from Penzance, captain?" I enquired.

"Why," he answered, "all of a hundred and fifty miles."

"If that be so, then," I cried, "our drift must have been that of a balloon."

"Will those poor creatures ever be able to reach

the English coast in that broken boat?" exclaimed one of the ladies, indicating the Spitfire, that now lay dwarfed right over the stern of the ship.

"If they are longshoremen—and yet I don't know," replied the captain, with a short laugh; "a boatman will easily handle a craft of that sort when a blue-water sailor would be all abroad. Have you lunched, Mr. Barclay?"

"No, captain, I have not; neither can I say I have breakfasted."

"Oh, confound it, man, you should have said so before. Step this way, sir, step this way." And he led me to the companion-hatch that conducted to the saloon, pausing on the road, however, to beckon with a square forefinger to a sober Scotch-faced personage in a monkey-jacket and loose pilot trousers—the chief mate, as I afterward learned—to whom in a wheezy under-tone he addressed some instructions which I gathered from one or two syllables I overheard, referred to the speaking of the inward-bound vessels and to our transshipment.

At this moment a door close beside which I was standing opened, and Grace came out, followed by the kind lady Mrs. Barstow. She had removed her hat and jacket, and was sweet and fresh with the application of such toilet conveniences as her sympathetic acquaintance could provide her with. Captain Parsons stared at her and then whipped off his tall hat.

"This is better than the Spitfire, Grace," said I. "Oh, yes, Herbert," she answered, sending a glance of her fine dark eyes over the saloon; "but Mrs. Barstow tells me that the ship is going to New Zealand."

"So she is; so she is," cried Captain Parsons, bursting into a laugh; "and, if you choose, Mr. Barclay and you shall accompany us."

She looked at him with a frightened girlish air.

"Oh, no, Miss Bellassys," said Mrs. Barstow. "Captain Parsons is a great humorist. I have made two voyages with him, and he keeps me laughing from port to port. He will see that you get safely home; and I wish that we could count upon arriving at Otaga as speedily as you will reach England."

Just then a man in a camel jacket entered the saloon—cuddy, I believe, is the proper name for it. He was the head steward, and Captain Parsons immediately called to him:

"Jenkins, here. This lady and gentleman have not breakfasted; they have been shipwrecked, and wish to lunch. You understand? And draw the cork of a quart bottle of champagne. There is no better sea-physic, Miss Bellassys. I've known what it is to be five days in an open boat in the middle of the Indian Ocean, and I believe if even Mrs. Barstow had been my wife I should not have scrupled to make away with her for a quart bottle of champagne."

Our lunch consisted of cold fowl and ham and champagne—good enough meat and drink, we should say, for the sea, and almost good enough, one might add, for a pair of loveliest fugitives.

"How is your appetite, my darling?" said I.

"I think I can eat a little of that cold chicken."

"This is very handsome treatment, Grace. Upon my word, if the captain preserves this sort of behavior I do not believe we shall be in any great hurry to quit his ship."

"Is not she a noble vessel?" exclaimed Grace, rolling her eyes over the saloon. "After the poor little Spitfire's cabin! And how different is this motion! It soothes me, after the horrid tumbling of the last two days."

"This is a very extraordinary adventure," said I, eating and drinking with a relish and an appetite not a little heightened by observing that Grace was making a very good meal. "It may not end so soon as we hope, either. First of all we have to fall in with a homeward-bound ship, then she has to receive us, then she has to arrive in the Channel and transfer us to a tug or a smack or anything else which may be willing to put us ashore; and there is always the chance of her not falling in with such a craft as we want until she is as high as the Forelands—past Boulogne, in short. But no matter, my own. We are together, and that is everything."

She took a sip of the champagne that the steward had filled her glass with, and said, in a musing voice, "What will the people in the ship think of me?"

"What they may think need not trouble us," said I. "I told Captain Parsons that we were engaged to be married. Is there anything very extraordinary in a young fellow taking the girl he is engaged to out for a sail in his yacht, and being blown away and nearly wrecked by a heavy gale of wind?"

"Oh, but they will know better," she exclaimed, with a pout.

"Well, I forgot, it is true, that I told the captain we sailed from Boulogne. But how is he to know your people don't live there?"

"It will soon be whispered about that I have eloped with you, Herbert," she exclaimed.

"Who's to know the truth if it isn't divulged, my pe?" said I.

"But it is divulged," she answered.

I stared at her. She eyed me wistfully as she continued, "I told Mrs. Barstow the story. I am not ashamed of my conduct, and I ought not to feel ashamed of the truth being known."

There was logic and heroism in this closing sentence, though it did not strictly correspond with the expression she had just now let fall as to what the people would think. I surveyed her silently, and after a little exclaimed:

"You are in the right. Let the truth be known. I shall give the skipper the whole yarn, that there may be no misunderstanding; for, after all, we may have to stick to this ship for some days, and it would be very unpleasant to find ourselves misjudged."

VII.

I GAZED, as I spoke, through the windows of the saloon or cuddy front which overlooked the main-deck, where a number of steerage passengers were standing in groups; the ship was before the wind; and the great main-course was hauled up to its yard, and I could see to as far as the foremast, where a fragment of bowsprit showed under the white arch of the foresail; some sailors in colored apparel were hauling upon a rope hard by the foremast; a gleam of misty sunshine was pouring full upon this window framed picture, and crowded it with rich oceanic tints softened by the rude like swaying shadows of the rigging. An extraordinary thought flashed into my head.

"By Jove, Grace, I wonder if there's a parson on board!"

"Why do you wonder?"

"If there is a parson on board he might be able to marry us."

She colored, smiled and looked grave all in a breath.

"A ship is not a church," said she, almost demurely.

"No," I answered, "but a parson's a parson wherever he is; he carries with him the same appetite, the same dress, the same powers, no matter whither his steps conduct him."

She shook her head, smiling, but her blush had faded, nor could her smile conceal a little look of alarm in her eyes.

"My darling," said I, "surely if there should be a clergyman on board you will not object to his marrying us? It would end all our troubles, anxieties, misgivings—thrust Lady Amelia out of the question altogether, save us from a tedious spell of waiting ashore—"

"But the objections which would hold good on shore would hold good here," she said, with her face averted.

"No, I can't see it," said I, talking so noisily out of the enthusiasm the notion had raised in me that she looked round to say "Hush!" and then turned her head again. "There must be a difference," said I, sobering my voice, "between the marriage ceremony as performed on sea and on shore. The burial service is different, and you will find the other is so too. There is too much horizon at sea, too much distance, to talk of consent. Guardians and parents are too far off. As to bans, whose going to say 'no' on board a vessel?"

"I cannot imagine that it would be a proper wedding," said she, shaking her head.

"Do you mean in the sense of its being valid, my sweet?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"But don't you see that a parson's a parson everywhere? Whom God hath joined together—"

The steward entered the saloon at that moment. I called to him, and said, politely:

"Have you many passengers, steward?"

"Ay, sir, too many," he answered. "The steerage is pretty high clock a-bloak."

"Saloon passengers, I mean?"

"Every berth's hopped up, sir."

"What sort of people are they, do you know? Any swells among them?"

"That depends how they're viewed," he answered, with a cautious look round and a slow smile. "If by themselves, they're all swells; if by others—why—"

"I thought perhaps you might have something in the colonial bishopric way."

"No, sir, there's nothin' in that way aboard. Plenty as needs it, I dussay. The language of some of them steerage chaps is something to turn the black hairs of a monkey white. Talk of the vulgarity of sailors!"

The glances of this steward were dry and shrewd, and his smile slow and knowing; I chose, therefore, to ask him no more questions. But then substantially he had told me what I wanted to gather, and secretly I felt as much mortified and disappointed as though for days past I had been thinking of nothing else than finding a parson on board ship at sea and being married to Grace by him.

A little later on Mrs. Barstow came into the saloon and asked Grace to accompany her on deck. My sweetheart put on her hat and jacket, and the three of us went on to the poop.

"A voyage in such a ship as this, Mrs. Barstow," said I, "should make the most delightful trip of a person's life."

"It is better than yachting," said Grace, softly.

"A voyage soon grows tedious," remarked Mrs. Barstow. "Miss Bellassys, I trust you will share my cabin while you remain with us."

"You are exceedingly kind," said Grace.

Others of the passengers now approached, and I observed a general effort of kindness and politeness. The ladies gathered about Grace and the gentlemen about me, and the time slipped by while I related my adventures and listened to their experiences of the weather in the Channel and such matters. It was strange, however, to feel that every hour that passed was widening our distance from home. I never for an instant regretted my determination to quit the yacht. Yet at this early

time of our being aboard the Carthusian I was disquieted by a sense of mild dismay when I ran my eye over the ship and marked her sliding and court-testing steadily forward to the impulse of her wide and gleaming pinions, and reflected that this sort of thing might go on for days and perhaps for weeks—that we might arrive at the equator, perhaps at the latitude of the Cape of Good Hope, without meeting a vessel to serve our turn!

Well, in talking, and in thinking, and in looking that afternoon passed, and at half past five o'clock we went to dinner. I had had a short chat with Captain Parsons, and from him had learned that there was no parson on board, though I had flattered myself that I had put the question in such a way as not to excite in his brine-seasoned mind the faintest suspicion of the meaning of my curiosity. I had also given him to understand that I was a young man of substance, and begged him to believe that any cost Grace and I might put the ship to should be repaid with interest to her owners.

It was impossible for me to find myself seated with Grace at my side at that cheerful, hospitable, sparkling, sea dinner-table without acutely realizing the difference betwixt this time and yesterday. Some ten or twelve persons sat down, but there was room for another half dozen, which I believe about completed the number of saloon passengers the Carthusian carried. Captain Parsons, with a countenance varnished as from the recent employment of soap, was at the head of the table, with Mrs. Barstow on his right, and I observed that they frequently conversed while they often directed their eyes at Grace and me.

The chief officer, the Scotch-faced man I have before written of, sat at the foot of the table, slowly and soberly eating.

"It would be strange, sir," said I, addressing him, "if we do not hereabouts speedily fall in with something homeward bound."

"I would, sir," he answered, with a broad Scotch accent.

"Yet not so strange, Mr. McCosh," said a passenger sitting opposite to me, "if you come to consider how wide the sea is here."

"Well, perhaps not so strange either," said Mr. McCosh, in his sawdusty voice, speaking with his mouth full.

"Should you pass a steamer at night," said I, "would you stop and hail her?"

He reflected, and said he thought not.

"Then our opportunities for getting home must be limited to daylight," said I.

This seemed too obvious to him, I suppose, to need a response.

"Are you in a very great hurry, Mr. Barclay, to get home?" exclaimed a passenger with a slight cast in his eye that gave a turn of humor to his face.

"Why, yes," I answered, with a glance at Grace, who was eating quietly at my side, seldom looking up, though she was as much stared at even after all these hours as decent manners would permit. "You will please remember that we are without luggage."

"Eh, but that is to be managed, I think. There are many of us here of both sexes," continued the gentleman with the cast in his eye, sending a squint along the row of people on either side of the table. "You should see New Zealand, sir. The country abounds with fine and noble prospects, and I do not think," he added, with a smile, "that you will find occasion to complain of a want of hospitality."

"I am greatly obliged," said I, giving him a bow; "but New Zealand is a little distant for the moment."

The subject of New Zealand was now, however, started and the conversation on its harbors, revenue, political parties, debts, prospects and the like was exceedingly animated, and lasted pretty nearly through the dinner. Though Grace and I were seated at the foremost end of the table, removed nearly by the whole length of it from the captain, I was sensible that his talk to those near him mainly concerned us. He had, as I have said, Mrs. Barstow on one hand, and on the other sat the lady with the thin lips and sausage curls. I would notice him turn first to one, then to the other, his round, sea-colored face, broadened by an arch, knowing smile; then Mrs. Barstow would look at us, then the lady with thin lips would stretch her neck to take a peep down the line in which we sat; others would also look, smirk a bit, and address themselves with amused faces in a low voice to Captain Parsons.

All this was not so marked as to be offensive, or even embarrassing, but it was a very noticeable thing, and I whispered to Grace that we seemed to form the sole theme of conversation at the captain's end.

When dinner was over we went on deck. Mrs. Barstow and the thin-lipped lady carried off Grace for a stroll up and down the planks, and I joined a few of the gentlemen passengers on the quarter-deck to smoke a cigar one of them gave me. There was a fine breeze out of the east, and the ship, with yards nearly square, was sliding and rolling stately along her course at some six or seven miles in the hour. The west was flushed with red, but a few stars were trembling in the airy dimness of the evening blue over the stern, and in the south was the young moon, a pale curl, but gathering from the clearness of the atmosphere a promise of radiance enough later on to touch the sea with silver under it and fling a gleam of her own upon our soaring sails.

I had almost finished my cigar—two bells, seven

o'clock, had not long been struck—when one of the stewards came out of the saloon, and approaching me, said:

"Captain Parson's compliments, sir, and he'll be glad to see you in his cabin if you can spare him a few minutes."

"With pleasure," I answered, flinging the end of my cigar overboard, instantly concluding that he wished to see me privately to arrange about terms and accommodation while Grace and I remained with him.

I followed the man into the saloon, and was led right aft, where stood two large cabins. On entering I found Captain Parsons sitting at a table covered with nautical instruments, books, writing materials and so forth. A lighted bracket-lamp near the door illuminated the interior, and gave me a good view of the hearty little fellow and his sea-furniture, cot, lockers, chest of drawers and wearing apparel that slid to and fro upon the bulkhead as it dangled from pegs. His air was grave and his countenance as full of importance as, with such features as his, it was capable of being. Having asked me to take a seat, he surveyed me thoughtfully for some moments in silence.

"Young gentleman," said he, at last, "before we man the windlass I have to beg you'll not take amiss any questions I may put. Whatever I ask won't be out of curiosity. I believe I can see my way to doing you and your pretty young lady a very considerable service; but I shall first want all the truth you may think proper to give me."

I heard him with some astonishment. What could he mean? What service had he in contemplation to render me?

"The truth of what, Captain Parsons?" said I.

"Well, now, your relations with Miss Bellassys: it's an elopement, I believe?"

"That is so," I answered, hardly knowing whether to laugh or to feel vexed.

"Though the young lady," he continued, "is not one of my passengers in the sense that the rest of 'em are, she is aboard my ship, and as though by the Divine ordering committed to my care, as are you and every man jack of the two hundred and four souls who are sailing with me. Of course you know that we ship-masters have very great powers."

I merely inclined my head, wondering what he was driving at.

"A ship-master," he proceeded, "is lord paramount, quite the cock of his own walk, and nothing must crow where he is. He is responsible for the safety and comfort, for the well-being—moral, spiritual and physical—of every creature aboard his ship, no matter what the circumstances under which that creature came aboard, whether by paying cabin money, by shipwreck, or by signing articles. Miss Bellassys has come into my hands, and it's my duty, as master of this ship, to see that she's done right by."

The conflict of twenty emotions rendered me quite incapable to do anything more than to stare at him.

"Now, Mr. Barclay," he continued, crossing his bow legs, and wagging a little stunted forefinger in a kindly, admonishing way, "don't be affronted by this preface, and don't be affronted by what I am going to ask; for if all be plain sailing I shall be able to do you and the young lady a real A1, copper fastened service."

"Pray ask any questions you wish, captain?" said I.

"This is an elopement, you say?"

"It is."

"Where from?"

"Boulogne-sur-Mer."

"Bullong-sewer-Mare," he repeated. "Was the young lady at school?"

"She was."

"What might be her age, now?"

"She will be eighteen next so-and-so," said I, giving him the month.

He suddenly jumped up, and I could not imagine what he meant to do till, pulling open a drawer, he took out a large box of cigars, which he placed upon the table.

"Pray light up, Mr. Barclay," said he, looking to see if the window of his port-hole was open. "They are genuine Havana cigars." He lighted one himself, and proceeded: "What necessity was there for this elopement?"

"Miss Bellassys is an orphan," I answered, still so much astonished that I found myself almost mechanically answering him, as though I were in a witness-box and he were Mr. Justice Parsons in a wig, instead of an old, bow-legged, pimple-nosed merchant skipper. "Her father was Colonel Bellassys, who died some years ago in India. On her mother's death she was taken charge of by her aunt, Lady Amelia Roscoe. Lady Amelia's husband was a gentleman named Withcombe Roscoe, whose estate in Kent adjoined my father's, Sir Herbert Barclay, the engineer."

"D'ye mean the gentleman who built the L—Docks?"

"Yes."

"Oh, indeed!" cried he, looking somewhat impressed. "And how is your father, Mr. Barclay?"

"He died about two years and a half ago," I replied. "But you have asked me for the truth of this elopement, Captain Parsons. There were constant quarrels between my father and Mr. Withcombe Roscoe over a hedge, or wall, or ditch—some matter contemptibly insignificant; but if the value of the few rods or perches of ground had been rep-

resented by the national debt there could not have been hotter blood, more ill-feeling between them. Litigation was incessant, and I'm sorry to say that it still continues, though I should be glad to end it."

"Sort of entail lawsuit, I suppose?" said the captain, smoking with enjoyment and listening with interest and respect.

"Just so," said I, finding now a degree of happiness in this candor; it was a kind of easing of my conscience to tell this man my story, absolute stranger as he had been to me but a few hours before.

"Mr. Roscoe died, and Lady Amelia took a house in London. I met her niece at the house of a friend, and fell in love with her."

"So I should think," exclaimed Captain Parsons. "Never saw a sweeter young lady in all my time."

"Well, to cut this part of the story, when her ladyship learned that her niece was in love, and discovered who her sweetheart was—this occupied a few months, I may tell you—she packed the girl off to Boulogne, to a Mademoiselle Championnet, who keeps a sort of school at that place; though Grace was sent there professedly to learn French. This mademoiselle is some sort of poor connection of Lady Amelia's, a bigoted Catholic, as her ladyship is, and it soon grew clear to my mind from letters I received from Miss Bellassys, dispatched in the old romantic fashion—"

"What fashion's that?" called out the captain.

"The bribed house-maid, sir—it soon grew clear to my mind, I say, that Lady Amelia's main object in sending the girl to Mademoiselle Championnet was to get her converted."

"A d—d shame!" cried Captain Parsons.

"Do you need to hear more?" said I, smiling. "I love the girl, and she loves me; she was an orphan, and I did not consider the aunt a right and proper guardian for her; she consented to elope, and we did elope, and here we are, captain."

"And you were bound to Penzance, I understand?"

"Yes."

"Why Penzance?"

"To get married at a church in that district."

"Who was going to marry ye?"

"A cousin of mine, the Reverend Frank Howes—of course after we had fulfilled the confounded legal conditions which obstruct young people like ourselves in England."

"And what are the legal conditions? It's so long since I was married that I forget 'em," said the captain.

"Residence, as it is called; then the consent of her ladyship, as Miss Bellassys is under age."

"But she isn't going to consent, is she?"

"How can she refuse, after our association in the yacht, and here?"

It took him some time to understand; he then shut one eye and said, "I see."

We pulled at our cigars in silence as we gazed at each other. The evening had blackened into night; a silver star or two slid in the open port, through which came the washing noise of the water as it swept eddying and seething past the bends into the wake of the ship; now and again the rudder jarred harshly, and there was a monotonous tread of feet overhead. We were at the extreme after end of the vessel, where the heave of her would be most sensibly felt, and she was still courtesying with some briskness, but I scarcely heeded the motion, so effectually had the mad behavior of the Spitfire cured me of all tendency to nausea.

"And now, Mr. Barclay," exclaimed the captain, after a silence of a minute or two, "I'll explain why I have made so free as to ask you for your story. It's the opinion of Mrs. Barstow and Miss Mogadore that Miss Bellassys and you ought to be married right away off. It's a duty that's owing to the young lady. You can see it for yourself, sir. Her situation, young gentleman," he added, with emphasis, "is not what it ought to be."

"I agree in every word," I exclaimed; "but—" He interrupted me. "Her dignity is yours, her reputation is yours. And the sooner you're married the better."

I was about to speak, but despite my pronouncing several words, he proceeded obstinately:

"Mrs. Barstow is one of the best-natured women in the world. There never was a more practical lady; sees a thing in a minute; and you may believe in her advice as you would in the fathom-marks on a lead-line. Miss Mogadore, the young lady that sat on my left at table—did you notice her, Mr. Barclay?"

"A middle-aged lady, with curls?"

"Eight-and-thirty. Ain't that young enough? Ay, Miss Mogadore has two curls; and let me tell you that her nose heads the right way. Miss Mogadore wasn't behind the door when brains were served out. Well, she and Mrs. Barstow, and your humble servant," he convulsed his short square figure into a sea-bow, "are for having you and Miss Bellassys married straight away off."

"So there is a clergyman on board?" I cried, feeling the blood in my face, and staring eagerly at him.

"No, sir," said he, "there's no clergyman aboard my ship."

"Then," said I, almost sulkily, "what on earth, Captain Parsons, is the good of you and Mrs. Barstow and Miss Mogadore advising Miss Bellassys and me to get married straight away off, as you term it?"

"It ought to be done," said he, with an emphatic nod.

"What! without a parson?" I cried.

"I am a parson," he exclaimed.

I imagined he intended a stupid pun upon his name.

"Parson enough," he continued, "to do your business. I'll marry you."

"You?" I shouted.

"Yes, me," he returned, striking his breast with his fist.

"Pray where were you ordained?" said I, disgusted with the bad taste of what I regarded as a joke.

"Ordained?" he echoed. "I don't understand you. I'm the master of a British merchantman, and as such can and do desire for Miss Bellassys's sake to marry ye."

Now, I do not know how, when, or where I had stumbled upon the fact, but all on a sudden it came into my head that it was as Captain Parsons said—namely, that the master of a British merchantman was empowered, whether by statute, by precedent, or by recognition of the laws of necessity, to celebrate the marriage service on board his own ship at sea. I may have read it in the corner of a newspaper—in some column of answers to correspondents—as likely as not a work of fiction; but the mere fact of having heard of it persuaded me that Captain Parsons was in earnest; and very much indeed did he look in earnest as he surveyed me with an expression of triumph in his little eyes while I hung in the wind, swiftly thinking.

"But am I to understand," said I, fetching a breath, "that a marriage at sea, with nobody but the captain of the ship to officiate, is legal?"

"Certainly," he cried. "Let me splice you to Miss Bellassys, and there's nothing mortal outside the Divorce Court that can sunder you. How many couples do you think I've married in my time?"

"I cannot imagine."

"Six," he cried; "and the're all doing well, too."

"Have you a special marriage service at sea?"

"The same, word for word, as you have it in the prayer-book."

"And when it is read—" said I, pausing.

"I enter the circumstance in the official log-book, duly witnessed, and then there you are, much more married than it would delight you to feel if afterward you should find out you've made a mistake."

My heart beat fast. Though I never dreamed for an instant of accepting the skipper's offices seriously, yet the ceremony he performed should be legal; it would be a trump card in my hand for any game I might hereafter have to play with Lady Amelia.

"But how," said I, "are you going to get over the objections to my marriage?"

"What objections? The only objection I see is your not being married already."

"Why," said I, "residence or license."

He flourished his hand. "You're both aboard my ship, aren't ye? That's residence enough for me. As to license, there's no such thing at sea. Suppose a couple wanted to get married in the middle of the Pacific Ocean; where's the license to come from?"

"But how about the consent of the guardian?"

"The lawful guardian isn't here," he answered; "the lawful guardian is leagues astern. No use talking of guardians aboard ship. The young lady being in this ship constitutes me her guardian, and it's enough for you that I give my consent."

His air as he pronounced these words induced such a fit of laughter that for several moments I was unable to speak. He appeared to enjoy my merriment heartily, and sat watching me with the broadest of grins.

"I'm glad you take to the notion kindly," said he. "I was afraid, with Mrs. Barstow, that you'd create a difficulty."

"I? Indeed, Captain Parsons, I have nothing in the world else to do, nothing in the world else to think of, but to get married. But how about Miss Bellassys?" I added, with a shake of the head. "What will she have to say to a shipboard wedding?"

"You leave her to Mrs. Barstow and Miss Mogadore," said he, with a nod. "Besides, it's for her to be anxious to get married. Make no mistake, young man. Until she becomes Mrs. Barclay, her situation is by no means what it ought to be."

"But is it the fact, captain," I exclaimed, visited by a new emotion of surprise and incredulity, "that a marriage celebrated at sea by the captain of a ship is legal?"

Instead of answering, he counted upon his fingers:

"Three and one are four, and two are six, and two's eight, and three's eleven, and four again's fifteen." He paused, looking up at me, and exclaimed, with as much solemnity as he could impart to his briny voice: "If it isn't legal, all I can say is, God help fifteen of us fine a set of children as ever a man could wish to clap eyes on—not counting the twelve parents that I married. But, since you seem to doubt—I wish I had the official log-books containing the entries—tell ye what I'll do!"

He exclaimed, jumping up. "Do you know Mr. Higginson?"

"A passenger, I presume?"

"Ay, one of the shrewdest lawyers in New Zealand. I'll send for him, and you shall hear what he says."

But on putting his head out to call for the steward he saw Mr. Higginson sitting at the saloon table, reading. Some whispering followed, and

they both arrived, the captain carefully shutting the door behind him. Mr. Higginson was a tall, middle-aged man, with a face that certainly looked intellectual enough to inspire one with some degree of confidence in anything he might deliver. He put on a pair of *pince-nez* glasses, bowed to me, and took a chair. The captain began awkwardly, abruptly, and in a rumbling voice:

"Mr. Higginson, I'll tell you in half a dozen words how the case stands. No need for mystery. Mr. Barclay's out on an eloping tour. He don't mind my saying so, for we want nothing but the truth aboard the Carthusian. He's run away with that sweet young lady we took off his yacht, and is anxious to get married, and Mrs. Barstow and Miss Mogadore don't at all relish the situation the young lady's put herself in, and they're for marrying her as quickly as the job can be done."

Mr. Higginson nursed his knee and smiled at the deck with a look of embarrassment, though he had been attending to the skipper's words with lawyer-like gravity down to that moment.

"You see," continued Captain Parsons, "that the young lady being aboard my ship is under my care."

"Just so," murmured Mr. Higginson.

"Therefore I'm her guardian, and it's my duty to look after her."

"Just so," murmured Mr. Higginson.

"Now I suppose you're aware, sir," continued the captain, "that the master of a British merchantman is fully empowered to marry any couple aboard his ship?"

"Empowered by what?" asked Mr. Higginson.

"He has the right to do it, sir," answered the captain.

"It is a subject," said Mr. Higginson, nervously, "upon which I am hardly qualified to give an opinion."

"Is a shipboard marriage legal, or is it not legal?" demanded the captain.

"I cannot answer as to the legality," answered the lawyer, "but I believe there are several instances on record of marriages having taken place at sea, and I should say," he added slowly and cautiously, "that, in the event of their legality ever being tested, no court would be found willing, on the merits of the contracts as marriages, to set them aside."

"There ye have it, Mr. Barclay!" cried the captain, with a triumphant swing round in his chair.

"In the case of a marriage at sea," continued Mr. Higginson, looking at me, "I should certainly counsel the parties not to depend upon the validity of their union, but to make haste to confirm it by a second marriage on their arrival at port."

"Needless expense and trouble," whispered out the captain; "there's the official log-book: what more's wanted?"

"But is there no form required, no license necessary?" I exclaimed, addressing Mr. Higginson.

"Hardly at sea, I should say," he answered, smiling.

"My argument!" shouted the captain.

"But the young lady is under age," I continued.

"She is an orphan, and her aunt is her guardian. How about her aunt's consent, sir?"

"How can it be obtained?" exclaimed the lawyer.

"My argument again!" roared the captain.

"No doubt," said Mr. Higginson, "as the young lady is under age the marriage could be rendered by the action of the guardian null and void. But would the guardian in this case take such a step? Would she not rather that this union at sea should be confirmed by a wedding on shore?"

"You exactly express my hope," said I; "but before we decide, Captain Parsons, let me first of all talk the matter over with Miss Bellassy."

"All right, sir," he answered, "but don't lose sight of this: that while the young lady's aboard my ship I'm her natural guardian and protector; the law holds me accountable for her safety and well-being, and what I say is, she ought to be married. I've explained why; and I say she ought to be married!"

VIII.

A FEW minutes later I quitted the cabin, leaving the captain and Mr. Higginson arguing upon the powers of a commander of a ship, the skipper shouting, as I opened the door, "I tell you, Mr. Higginson, that the master of a vessel may not only legally marry a couple, but may legally christen their infants, sir, and then legally bury the lot of them if they should die."

I found Grace seated at the table between Mrs. Barstow and Miss Mogadore. Mrs. Barstow bestowed a smile upon me, but Miss Mogadore's thin lips did not part, and there was something very austere and acid in the gaze she fastened upon my face. The saloon was now in full blaze, and presented a very fine, sparkling appearance indeed. The motion of the ship was so quiet that the swing of the radiant lamps was hardly noticeable. Some eight or ten of the passengers were scattered about—a couple at chess, another reading, a third leaning back with his eyes fixed on a lamp, and so on.

I leaned over the back of my darling's chair and addressed some commonplaces to her and the two ladies, intending presently to withdraw her that I might have a long talk, but after a minute or two Mrs. Barstow rose and went to her cabin, a hint that Miss Mogadore was good enough to take. I seated myself in that lady's chair at Grace's side.

"Well, my pet, and what have they been talking to you about?"

"They have been urging me to marry you to-morrow morning, Herbert," she answered, with a smile that was half a pout, and a blush that did not signify so much embarrassment but that she could look at me.

"I am fresh from a long talk with the captain," said I, "and he has been urging me to do the same thing."

"It is ridiculous," she said, holding down her head. "There is no clergyman in the ship."

"But the captain of a vessel may act as a clergyman, under the circumstances," said I.

"I don't believe it, Herbert."

"But see here, Grace," said I, speaking earnestly but softly, for there were ears not far distant, "it is not likely that we should regard the captain's celebration of our marriage here as more than something that will strengthen our hands for the struggle with your aunt. Until we have been joined by a clergyman in proper shipshape fashion, as Captain Parsons himself might say, we shall not be man and wife; but then, my darling, consider this: first of all it is in the highest degree probable that a marriage performed on board a ship by her captain is legal; next, that your aunt would suppose we regarded the union as legal, when of course she would be forced to conclude we regarded ourselves as man and wife. Would she then dare come between us? Her consent must be wrung from her by this politic stroke of shipboard wedding, that to her mind would be infinitely more significant than our association in the yacht. She will go about and inquire if a shipboard wedding is legal; her lawyers will answer her as best they can, but their advice will be, Secure your niece by sending your consent to Penzance that she may be legitimately married in an English church by a Church of England clergyman."

She listened thoughtfully, but with an air of childish simplicity that was inexpressibly touching to my love for her.

"It would be merely a ceremony," said she, leaning her cheek in her hand, "to strengthen your appeal to Aunt Amelia?"

"Wholly, my darling."

"Well, dearest," said she, gently, "if you wish it—"

I could have taken her to my heart for her ready compliance. I had expected a resolved refusal, and had promised myself some hours both that evening and next day of exhortation, entreaty, and representation. I was, indeed, hot on the project, and even as I talked to her I felt my enthusiasm growing. Secretly I had no doubt whatever that Captain Parsons was empowered as master of a British merchantman to marry us, and although, as I had told her, I should consider the ceremony as simply an additional weapon for fighting Aunt Amelia with, yet as a contract it might securely bind us too; we were to be parted only by the action of the aunt; this, I felt assured, for the sake of her niece's fame and future and for her own name, her ladyship would never attempt; so that from the moment the captain ended the service, Grace would be my wife to all intents and purposes, which indeed was all we had in view when we glided out of Boulogne harbor in the poor little Spitfire.

However, though she had sweetly and promptly consented, a great deal remained to talk about. I repeated all that Captain Parsons and all that Mr. Higginson had said, and when we had exhausted the subject we naturally spoke of our prospects of quitting the Carthusian; and, one subject suggesting another, we chattering till about nine o'clock, at which hour the stewards arrived with wine and grog and biscuits, whereupon the passengers put away their books and chess boards and gathered about the table, effectually ending our *tele-a-tele*. Then Mrs. Barstow arrived, followed by Miss Mogadore. I took the former lady aside, leaving Grace in charge of the acidulated gentlewoman with the curls.

"Miss Bellassy tells me," said I, "that you have warmly counseled her to allow Captain Parsons to marry us. You are very good. You could not do us a greater service than by giving such advice. She has consented, asking only that the ceremony shall be privately performed in the captain's cabin."

"She is very young," replied Mrs. Barstow—"too young, I fear, to realize her position. I am a mother, Mr. Barclay, and my sympathies are entirely with your charming sweetheart. Under such conditions as we find her in, we must all wish to see her married. Were her mother living, I am sure that would be her desire."

"Were her mother living," said I, "there would have been no elopement."

She inclined her head with a cordial gesture. "Miss Bellassy," said she, "has been very candid. As a mother myself, I must blame her; but as a woman—" She shook her head, smiling.

We stood apart conversing for some time, and were then interrupted by the head steward, who came to tell me that by orders of the captain I was to sleep in a berth occupied by one of the passengers, a Mr. Tooth. I went to inspect this berth, and was very well pleased to find a clean and comfortable bed prepared.

I had my pipe and a pouch of tobacco in my pocket, and thought I would go on deck for half an hour before retiring to bed. As I passed the table on my way to the companionway-ladder, Mr. Hig-

ginson rose from a book he had been reading, and detained me by putting his hand on my arm.

"I have been thinking over the matter of marriages at sea, Mr. Barclay," he began, with a wary look to make sure that no one was listening. "I wish we had a copy of the Merchant Shipping Acts for 1854, for I believe there is a section which provides that every master of a ship carrying an official log-book shall enter in it every marriage that takes place on board, together with the names and ages of the parties. And I fancy there is another section which provides that every master of every foreign-going ship shall sign and deliver to some mercantile marine authority a list containing among other things a statement of every marriage which takes place on board. There is also an Act called, if my memory serves me, the Confirmation of Marriage on her Majesty's Ships Act. But this, I presume, does not concern what may happen in merchant vessels. I should like to read up Hammick on the 'Marriage Laws of England.' One thing, however, is clear: marriage at sea is contemplated by the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854. Merchantmen do not carry chaplains; a clergyman in attendance as a passenger was assuredly not in the minds of those who are responsible for the Act. The sections, in my opinion, point to the captain as the person to officiate; and, having turned the matter thoroughly over, I don't scruple to pronounce that a marriage solemnized at sea by the master of a British merchantman is as legal and valid as though celebrated on shore in the usual way."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," said I.

"It is a most interesting point," said he. "It ought certainly to be settled."

I laughed out, and went on deck with my spirits in a dance. To think of such a marriage as we contemplated! and to find it in all probability as binding as the shore-going ceremony! Assuredly it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and the gale that had nearly fendered us was to end in returning us to our native shores a wedded pair! I filled my pipe and stood musing a bit, thinking of Candel and the others of the little dandy, of the yacht, of the gale we had outlived, and of twenty other like matters, when the voice of the captain broke in upon my reverie:

"This will be you, Mr. Barclay? I begin to know you now without candle-light, by your height."

"Yes, it is I, captain—just stepped on deck for a smoke and a breath of this cool wind before turning in. Do you know, when I view the great dark outline of your ship sweeping through this tremendous space of darkness, and then think of the crowds of people asleep in her heart, I can't but believe the post of commander of a big merchantman, like this vessel, foremost among the most responsible under the sun."

"Sir," you are right," replied the little man, in a voice that was almost oily with gratification. "Let us walk."

We started to measure the planks from the wheel to half-way the length of the poop.

"There is no doubt," said I, "that you, as master of this vessel, are, as you have all along contended, empowered to marry me to Miss Bellassy." And then I gave him the substance of what Mr. Higginson had said to me below.

"I was sure that Higginson would see it after thinking a bit," said he. "Of course I am empowered to marry on board my ship any couple that may apply to me. Have you spoken to Miss Bellassy?"

"I have."

"And is she agreeable?"

"Perfectly agreeable."

"Good!" said he, with a chuckle. "Now, when shall it be?"

"Oh, it is for you to say, captain."

"Ten o'clock to-morrow morning do?"

"Very well indeed," I answered; "but it will be quite private Captain Parsons; it is Miss Bellassy's wish."

I slept right through the night, and when I awoke Mr. Tooth was shaving himself, and the cabin was brilliant with sunshine, whitened to a finer glory yet by the broad surface of milk-white froth that was rushing past the ship. The ship was heeling to it as a yacht might; her yards were braced forward, and the snow at her forefoot soared and blew away in smoke to the sliding, irresistible thrust of her sharp metal stem. The sea for leagues and leagues rolled blue, foaming, brilliant; wool-like clouds lovely with prismatic glitterings in their skirts as they sailed from the sun were speeding into the southeast; the whole life of the world seemed to be in that morning—in the joyous sweep of the wind, and in the frolicsome frothing of each long blue ridge of rolling sea, in the triumphant speeding of the ship sliding buoyant from one soft foam-freckled hollow to another.

I drew a deep breath. "Ah!" thought I, "if it were always like this, now, and New Zealand not so distant!"

I saw nothing of Grace till the cabin breakfast was ready. Most of the first-class passengers had by this time assembled, some of those who had been seasick yesterday issuing from their cabins; and I noticed a general stare of admiration as my darling stepped forth, followed by Mrs. Barstow. Her long and comfortable night's rest had restored her bloom to her. How sweet she looked! how engaging the girlish dignity of her posture! how bright her timid eyes as she paused to send a glance round in search of me! I was instantly at her side.

"The ceremony is fixed for ten, I think?" said Mrs. Barstow; and here Miss Moggadore arrived, as one who had a right to be of us, not to say with us.

"I am of opinion," said she, "that the ceremony ought to be public."

"I'd rather not," I answered. "In fact, we both had rather not."

"But so many witnesses!" said Miss Moggadore. "Shall you be present?" inquired Mrs. Barstow.

"I hope to receive an invitation," answered Miss Moggadore.

"We shall count upon your being present," exclaimed Grace, sweetly; but the smile with which she spoke quickly faded; she looked grave and nervous, and I found some reproach in the eyes she lifted to my face. "It seems so unreal—almost impious, Herbert, as though we were acting a sham part in a terribly solemn act," she exclaimed, as we seated ourselves.

"There is no sham in it, my pet. Yonder sits Mr. Higginson, a lawyer, and that man has no doubt whatever that when we are united by the captain we shall be as much man and wife as any clergyman could make us."

"I consent, but only to please you," said she, with something of restlessness in her manner; and I noticed that she ate but little.

"My darling, you know why I wish this marriage performed," I said, speaking softly in her ear, for many eyes were upon us, and some ladies who had not before put in an appearance were seated almost opposite and constantly directed their gaze at us, while they would pass remarks in whispers when they bent their heads over their plates. "It can do no possible harm; it must be my cousin, not Captain Parsons, who makes you my wife. But then, Grace, it may be binding too, requiring nothing more than the sanctification of the union in the regular way; and it may—it will—create a difficulty for your aunt, which should go very near to extinguishing her."

She sighed and appeared nervous and depressed; but I was too eager to have my way to choose to notice her manner. It would be a thing of the past in a very little while; we might hope, at all events, to be on our way home shortly, and I easily foresaw I should never forgive myself after leaving the Carthusian if I suffered Grace to influence me into refusing the captain's offer to marry us, odd as the whole business was, and irregular as it might prove, too, for all I could tell.

IX.

WHEN breakfast was over, Mrs. Barstow took Grace to her cabin, and there they remained. Miss Moggadore stepped up to me as I was about to go on deck, and said:

"It is not yet too late, Mr. Barclay, and I really think it ought to be a public ceremony."

"Sooner than that I would decline it altogether," said I, in no humor at that moment to be teased by the opinions of an acculturated spinster.

"I consider," she said, "that a wedding can never take place in too public a manner. It is proper that the whole world should know that a couple are truly man and wife."

"The whole world," said I, "in the sense of this ship, must know it, as far as I am concerned, without seeing it."

"Well," she said, with a simper which her mere streak of lip was but little fitted to contrive, "I hope you will have all happiness in your wedded lives."

I bowed, without replying, and passed up the steps, not choosing to linger longer in the face of the people who hung about me with an air of carelessness, but with faces of curiosity.

Presently I looked at my watch—a quarter to ten. Mr. Tooth strolled up to me.

"All alone, Mr. Barclay?" "Is a fact, have you noticed, that when a man is about to get married people look off for him? I can understand this of a corpse; but a live young man, you know—and only because he's going to get married! By the way, as it is to be a private affair, I suppose there is no chance for me?"

"The captain is the host," I answered. "He is to play the father. If he chooses to invite you, by all means be present." As I spoke the captain came on deck, turning his head about in manifest search of me. He gravely beckoned with an air of ceremony, and Mr. Tooth and I went up to him. He looked at Mr. Tooth, who immediately said:

"Captain, a wedding at sea is good enough to remember—something for a man to talk about. Can't I be present?" And he dropped his head on one side with an insinuating smile.

"No, sir," answered Captain Parsons, with true sea-grace, and putting his hand on my arm he carried me right aft. "The hour's at hand," he said. "Who's to be present, d'ye know? for if it's to be a private affair we don't want a crowd."

"Mrs. Barstow and Miss Moggadore; nobody else, I believe."

"Better have a couple of men as witnesses. What d'ye say to Mr. Higginson?"

"Anybody you please, captain."

"And the second?" said he, tilting his hat and thinking. "McCosh? Yes, I don't think you can do better than McCosh. A thoughtful Scotchman, with an excellent memory." He pulled out his watch. "Five minutes to ten. Let us go below."

And down he went.

The steward was dispatched to bring Mr. Higginson and the chief mate, Mr. McCosh, to the captain's

cabin. The saloon was empty; possibly out of consideration to our feelings the people had gone on deck or withdrawn to their berths.

"Bless me! I had quite forgotten," cried Captain Parsons, as he entered his cabin. "Have you a wedding-ring, Mr. Barclay?"

"Oh, yes," I answered, laughing and pulling out the purse, in which I kept it. "Little use in sailing away with a young lady, Captain Parsons, to get married, unless you carry the ring with you."

"Glad you have it. We can't be too ship-shape. But I presume you know," said the little fellow, "that any sort of a ring would do—even a curtain ring. No occasion for the lady to wear what you slip on, though I believe it's expected she should keep it upon her finger till the service is over. Let me see now—there's something else I wanted to say. Oh, yes; who's to give the bride away?"

There was a knock at the door, and Mr. Higginson, followed by Mr. McCosh, entered.

"Mr. Higginson," immediately cried the captain, "you will give the bride away."

The lawyer put his hand upon his shirt-front and bowed. I glanced at Mr. McCosh, who had scarcely had time to do more than flourish a hair-brush. He was extraordinarily grave, and turned a very literal eye round about. I asked him if he had ever before taken part in a ceremony of this sort at sea. He reflected, and answered, "No, neither at-sea nor ashore."

"But, seeing that you are a witness, Mr. McCosh, you thoroughly understand the significance of the marriage service, I hope?" said Mr. Higginson, dryly.

"D'ye know, then, sir," answered McCosh, in the voice of a saw going through a balk of timber, "I never read or heard a line of the marriage service in all my life. But I have a very good understanding of the object of the ceremony."

"I hope so, Mr. McCosh," said the captain, looking at him doubtfully. "It is as a witness that you're here."

"I will be a fact, no doubt?" said Mr. McCosh.

"Certainly," said the lawyer.

"Then, of course," said the mate, "I shall always be able to swear to it."

"Ten minutes past ten," cried the captain, whipping out his watch. "I hope Miss Moggadore's not keeping the ladies waiting while she powders herself or fits a new cap to her hair."

He opened the door to call to the steward, then hopped back with a sudden convulsive sea-bow to make room for the ladies, who were approaching.

My darling was very white and looked at me pitifully. She came to my side and slipped her hand into mine, whispering under her breath, "Such a silly, senseless ceremony!" I pressed her fingers, and whispered back that the ceremony was not for us, but for Aunt Amelia. She wore her hat and jacket, and Mrs. Barstow was clad as for the deck; but Miss Moggadore, on the other hand, as though in justification of what the captain had said about her, made her appearance in the most extraordinary cap I had ever seen—an inflated arrangement, as though she were fresh from a breeze of wind that held it bladder-like. She had changed her gown, too, for a sort of Sunday dress of satin or some such material. She courted on entering, and took up her position alongside of McCosh, where she stood viewing the company with an austere gaze which so harmonized with the dry, literal, sober stare of the mate that I had to turn my back upon her to save the second explosion of laughter.

"Are we all ready?" said the little captain, in the voice of a man who might hail his mate to tell him to prepare to put the ship about, and McCosh mechanically answered:

"Ay, ay, sir, all ready."

On this the captain went to the table, where lay a big church service in large type, and putting on his glasses, looked at us over them as a hint for us to take our places. He began to read, so slowly that I foresaw, unless he skipped many of the passages, we should be detained half the morning in his cabin. He read with extraordinary enjoyment of the sound of his own voice, and constantly lifted his eyes, while he delivered the sentences as though he were admonishing instead of marrying us. Grace kept her head hung, and I felt her trembling when I took her hand. I had flattered myself that I should exhibit no nervousness in such an ordeal as this; but, though I was not sensible of any disposition of tears, I must confess that my secret agitation was incessantly prompting me to laughter of a hysterical sort, which I restrained with struggles that caused me no small suffering. It is at such times as these, perhaps, that the imagination is most inconveniently active.

The others stood behind me; I could not see them; it would have eased me, I think, had I been able to do so. The thought of McCosh's face, the fancy of Miss Moggadore's cap, grew dreadfully oppressive through my inability to vent the emotions they induced. My distress was increased by the mate's pronunciation of the word "Amen." He was always late with it, as though waiting for the others to lead the way, unless it was that he chose to take a "thocht" before committing himself. My wretchedness was heightened by the effect of this toneless Amen, whose belatedness he accentuated by the fervent manner in which he breathed it out.

Yet, in spite of the several grotesque conditions which entered into it, this was a brief passage of experience that was by no means lacking in romantic and even poetic beauty. The flash of the sunlit sea was in the atmosphere of the cabin,

and bulkhead and upper deck seemed to race with the rippling of the waves of light in them. Through the open port came the seething and pouring song of the ocean—the music of smiting billows, the small harmonies of foam-bells and of seething eddies. There was the presence of the ocean, too, the sense of its infinity, and of the speeding ship, a speck under the heavens, yet fraught with the passions and feelings of a multitude of souls bound to a new world, fresh from a land which many of them would never again behold.

The captain took a very long time in marrying us. Had this business possessed any sort of flavor of sentiment for Grace, it must have vanished under the slow, somewhat husky, self-complacent, deep-sea delivery of old Parsons. I took the liberty of pulling out my watch as a hint, but he was enjoying himself too much to be in a hurry. Nothing, I believe, could have so much contributed to the felicity of this man as the prospect of uniting one or more couples every day. On several occasions his eyes appeared to fix themselves on Miss Moggadore, to whom he would accentuate the words he pronounced by several nods. The marriage service, as we all know, is short, yet Captain Parsons kept us an hour in his cabin, listening to it. Before reciting "All ye that are married," he hemmed loudly, and appeared to address himself exclusively to Miss Moggadore, to judge by the direction in which he continued to nod emphatically.

At last he closed his book, slowly gazing at one or the other of us over his glasses, as if to witness the effect of his reading in our faces. He then opened his official log-book, and in a whisper, as though he were in church, called Mr. Higginson and Mr. McCosh to the table to witness his entry. Having written it, he requested the two witnesses to read it. Mr. McCosh pronounced it "ari reet," and Mr. Higginson nodded as gravely as though he were about to read a will.

"The ladies must see this entry too," said Captain Parsons, still preserving his Sabbathical tone. "Can't have too many witnesses. Never can tell what may happen."

The ladies approached and peered, and Miss Moggadore's face took an unusually hard and acid expression as she pored on the captain's handwriting. "Pray read it out, Miss Moggadore," said I.

"Ay, do," exclaimed the captain.

In a thin, harsh voice, like the cheep of a sheave set revolving in a block—wonderfully in accord, by the way, with the briny character of the ceremony—the lady read as follows:

"10:10 A. M.—Solennized the nuptials of Herbert Barclay, Esquire, gentleman, and Grace Bellassys, spinster. Present, Mrs. Barstow, Miss Moggadore, James Higginson, Esquire, solicitor, and Donald McCosh, chief officer. This marriage thus celebrated was conducted according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England."

"And now, Mr. Barclay," said Captain Parsons, as Miss Moggadore concluded, "you'd like a certificate under my hand, wouldn't you?"

"We're not strangers to Mr. and Mrs. Barclay's views," said Mr. Higginson, "and I am certainly of opinion, captain, that Mr. Barclay ought to have such a certificate as you suggest, that on his arrival at home he may send copies of it to those whom it concerns."

At the utterance of the words "Mr. and Mrs. Barclay" I laughed, while Grace started, gave me an appealing look, turned a deep red, and averted her face. The captain produced a sheet of paper, and, after looking into a dictionary once—"Nothing like accuracy," said he, "in jobs of this sort"—he asked, "Will this do?" and thereupon read as follows:

"Ship Carthusian,

"At Sea [such and such a date].
"I, Jonathan Parsons, master of the above-named ship Carthusian, of London, toward New Zealand, do hereby certify that I have this day united in the holy bonds of wedlock the following persons, to wit: Herbert Barclay, Esquire, and Grace Bellassys, spinster, in the presence of the undersigned."

"Nothing could be better," said I.

"Now, gentlemen and ladies," said the captain, "if you will please to sign your names."

This was done, and the document handed to me. I pocketed it with a clear sense of its value—as regards, I mean, the effect I might hope it would produce on Lady Amelia Roscoe. Captain Parsons and the others then shook hands with us, the two ladies kissing Grace, who, poor child, looked exceedingly frightened and pale.

"What's the French word for breakfast?" asked Captain Parsons.

"Dejeuner, sir," answered McCosh.

Parsons bent his ear with a frown. "You're giving me the Scotch for it, I believe," cried he.

"It's *dejeuner*, I think," said I, scarce able to speak for laughing.

"Ay, that'll be it," cried the captain. "Well, as Mr. and Mrs. Barclay don't relish the notion of a public *dejeuner*, we must drink their healths in a bottle of champagne."

He put his head out of the cabin and called to the steward, who brought the wine, and for hard upon half an hour my poor darling and I had to listen to speeches from old Parsons and the lawyer. Even McCosh must talk. In slow and rugged accents he invited us to consider how fortunate we were in having fallen into the hands of Captain Parsons. Had he been master of the Carthusian, there could have been no marriage, for he would not have known what to do. He had received a valuable professional hint that morning, and he begged to thank Captain Parsons for allowing him to be present on so interesting an occasion.

This said, the proceedings ended. Mrs. Barstow, passing Grace's hand under her arm, carried her off to her cabin, and I, accepting a cigar from the captain's box, went on deck to smoke it and see if there was anything in sight likely to carry us home.

Married! Could I believe it? If so—if I was indeed a wedded man—then I suppose never in the annals of love-making could anything stranger have happened than that a young couple eloping from a French port should be blown out into the ocean and there united, not by a priest, but by a merchant skipper. And supposing the marriage to be valid, as Mr. Higginson, after due deliberation, had declared such ocean wedding ceremonies as this to be, and supposing when we arrived ashore Lady Amelia Roscoe, despite Grace's and my association and the ceremony which had just ended, should continue to withhold her sanction, thereby rendering it impossible for my cousin to marry us, might not an exceedingly fine point arise—something to put the wits of the lawyers to their trumps in the case of her ladyship or me going to them? I mean this: seeing that our marriage took place at sea, seeing moreover that we were in a manner urged—or, as I might choose to put it, *compelled*—by Captain Parsons to marry, he assuming as master of the ship the position of guardian to the girl, and as her guardian exhorting and hurrying us to this union for her sake—would not the question of Lady Amelia Roscoe's consent be set aside, whether on the grounds of the peculiarity of our situation, or because it was impossible for us to communicate with her, or because the commander of the ship, a person in whom is vested the most despotic powers, politely, hospitably, but substantially too, *ordered* us to be married? I cannot put the point as a lawyer would, but I trust I make intelligible the thoughts which occupied my mind as I stood on the deck of the Carthusian after quitting the captain's cabin.

About twenty minutes later Grace arrived, accompanied by Mrs. Barstow. My darling did not immediately see me, and I noticed the eager way in which she stood for some moments scanning the bright and leaping scene of ocean. The passengers raised their hats to her; one or two ladies approached and seemed to congratulate her; she then saw me, and in a moment was at my side.

"How long is this to last, Herbert?"

"At any hour something may leave in sight, dearest."

"It distresses me to be looked at. And yet it is miserable to be locked up in Mrs. Barstow's cabin, where I am unable to be with you."

"Do not mind being looked at. Everybody is very kind, Grace; so sweet as you are, too—who can help looking at you? Despite your embarrassment, let me tell you that I am very well pleased with what has happened." And I repeated to her what had been passing in my mind.

But she was too nervous, perhaps too young, to understand. She had left her gloves in the yacht, her hands were bare, and her fine eyes rested on the wedding-ring upon her finger.

"Must I go on wearing this, Herbert?"

"Oh, yes, my own—certainly while you are here. What would Captain Parsons say, what would everybody think, if you removed it?"

"But I am not your wife," she exclaimed, with a pout, softly beating the deck with her foot, "and this ring is unreal; it signifies nothing."

I interrupted her. "I am not so sure that you not my wife," said I. She shot a look at me out of her eyes, which were large with alarm and confusion. "At all events, I believe I am your husband; and surely, my precious, you must hope that I am. But, whether or not, pray go on wearing that ring. You can put it off when we get to Penzance, and I will slip it on again when we stand before my cousin."

By this time the news of our having been married had traveled forward, conveyed to the Jacks and to the steerage passengers, as I took it, by one of the stewards. It was the sailors' dinner-hour, and I could see twenty of them on the fore-castle staring aft at us as one man, while every time we advanced to the edge of the poop where the rail protected the deck there was a universal upturning of bearded, rough faces, with much pointing and nodding of the women.

After all this the luncheon table was something of a relief, despite the rows of people at it.

Nothing was said about the marriage. The privacy of the affair lay as a sort of obligation of silence upon the kindly natured passengers, and though, as I have said, they could not keep their eyes off us, their conversation was studiously remote from the one topic about which we were all thinking. Lunch was almost ended when I spied the second mate peering down at us through the glass of the skylight, and in a few minutes he descended the cabin ladder and said something in a low voice to the captain.

"By George, Grace," said I, grasping her hand as it lay on her lap, and whipping out with the notion put into me by a look I caught from the captain. "I believe the second mate has come down to report a ship in sight."

She started, and turned eagerly in the direction of the captain, who had quickly given the mate his orders, for already the man had returned on deck.

Mrs. Barstow, seated close to the captain, nodded at us, and Parsons himself sung out quietly down the table:

"I believe, Mr. and Mrs. Barclay, this will be your last meal aboard the Carthusian."

I sprang with excitement to my feet.

"Anything in sight, captain?"

"Ay, a steamer—apparently a yacht. Plenty of time," added he, nevertheless rising leisurely as he spoke, on which all the passengers broke from the table—so speedily dull grows the sea-life, so quickly do people learn how to make much of the most trivial incidents upon the ocean—and in a few moments we were all on deck.

"Yes, by Jove, Grace, there she is, sure enough!" cried I, standing at the side with my darling, and pointing forward, where, still some miles distant, a point or two on the starboard bow, was a steamer, showing very small indeed at the extremity of the long, far-reaching line of smoke that was pouring from her. A passenger handed me a telescope. I leveled it, and then clearly distinguished a yacht-like structure, with a sort of sparkling about her hull, whether from gilt or brass or glass, that instantly suggested the pleasure vessel. Turning my face aft, I saw the second mate and an apprentice or midshipman in buttons in the act of hoisting a string of colors to the gaff-end. The flags soared in a graceful semicircle, and the whole ship looked brave in a breath with the pulling of the many-colored bunting, each flag delicate as gossamer against the blue of the sky, and the whole show of the deepest interest as the language of the sea, as the ship's own voice.

I approached the captain with Grace's hand under my arm.

"She has her answering pennant flying," he exclaimed, letting fall his glass to accost me, and he called to the second mate to haul down our signal.

"I believe she will receive you, Mr. Barclay."

"Where do you think she's bound, captain?"

"I should say undoubtedly heading for the English Channel," he answered.

"Captain Parsons, what can I say that will in any measure express my gratitude to you?"

"What I've done has given me pleasure, and I hope that you'll both live long, and that neither of you by a single look or word will ever cause the other to regret that you fell into the hands of Captain Parsons, of the good ship Carthusian."

Grace gave him a sweet smile. Now that it seemed we were about to leave this ship, she could gaze at him without alarm. He broke from us to deliver an order to the second mate, who re-echoed his command in a loud shout. In a moment a number of sailors came racing aft and fell to rounding-in, as it is called, upon the main and maintop-sail braces, with loud and hearty songs, which were re-echoed out of the white hollows aloft and combined with the splashing noise of waters and the small music of the wind in the rigging into a true ocean concert for the ear. The machinery of the braces brought the sails on the main to the wind; the ship's way was almost immediately arrested, and she lay quietly sinking and rising with a sort of hush of expectation along her decks which nothing disturbed save the odd farward-like sounds of the live stock somewhere forward.

The steamer was now rapidly approaching us, and by this time, without the aid of a glass, I made her out to be a fine screw yacht of some three hundred and fifty tons, painted black, with a yellow funnel forward of amidships, which gave her the look of a gunboat. She had a chart-house or some such structure near her bridge that was very liberally glazed, and blinding flashes leaped from the panes of glass as she rolled to and fro from the sun, as though she were quickly firing cannon charged with soundless and smokeless gunpowder. A figure paced the filament of bridge that was stretched before her funnel. He wore a gold band round his hat, and brass buttons on his coat. Two or three men leaned over the head-rail, viewing us as they approached, but her quarter-deck was deserted. I could find no hint of female apparel or the blue serge of the yachtsman.

Old Parsons, taking his stand at the rail clear of the crowd, waited until the yacht floated abreast, where with a few reverse revolutions of her propeller she came to a stand within easy talking distance, as handsome and finished a model as ever I had seen afloat.

"Ho, the yacht ahoy!" shouted Captain Parsons.

"Halloo!" responded the glittering figure from the bridge, manifestly the yacht's skipper.

"What yacht is that?"

"The Mermaid."

"Where are you from and where are you bound to?"

"From Madeira to Southampton," came back the response.

"That will do, Grace," cried I, joyfully.

"We took a lady and gentleman off their yacht, the Spitfire, that we found in a leaky condition yesterday," shouted Parsons, "having been dismayed in a gale and blown out of the Channel. We have them aboard. Will you receive them and set them ashore?"

"How many more besides them, sir?" bawled the master of the yacht.

"No more—them two only." And Parsons pointed to Grace and me, who stood conspicuously near the main rigging.

"Ay, ay, sir; we'll receive 'em. Will you send your boat?"

Captain Parsons flourished his hand in token of acquiescence; but he stood near enough to enable me to catch a few growling sentences referring to the laziness of yachtsmen, which he hove at the twinkling figure through his teeth in language which

certainly did not accord with his priestly tendencies. There was no luggage to pack, no parcels to hunt for, nothing for me to do but leave Grace a minute while I rushed below to see the stewards. So much confusion attended our transference that my recollection of what took place is vague. I remember that the second mate was incessantly shouting out orders until one of the ship's quarter-boats, with several men in her, had been fairly lowered to the water's edge and brought to the gangway, over which some steps had been thrown. I also remember once again shaking Captain Parsons most cordially by the hand, thanking him effusively for his kindness, and wishing him and his ship all possible good luck under the heavens. The passengers crowded round us and wished us good-bye, and I saw Mrs. Barstow slip a little parcel into Grace's hand and whisper a few words, whereupon they kissed each other with the warmth of old friends.

Mr. McCosh stood at the gangway, and I asked him to distribute the twenty-pound bank-note I handed to him among the crew of the boat that had taken us from the Spitfire. I further requested that the second mate, taking his proportion, which I left entirely to Mr. McCosh, would purchase some trifle of pin or ring by which to remember us.

Grace was then handed into the boat—a ticklish business to the eyes of a landsman, but performed with amazing dispatch and ease by the rough seamen, who passed her over and received her. I followed, watching my chance, and in a few moments the oars were out and the boat making for the yacht, that lay within musket-shot.

We were received by the captain of the yacht, a fellow with a face that reminded me somewhat of Caudel's, of a countenance and bearing much too sailorly to be rendered ridiculous by his livery of gold band and buttons. But before I could address him old Parsons hailed to give him the name of the Carthusian, and to request him to report the ship, and he ran on to the bridge to answer. I could look at nothing just then but the ship. Of all sea-pieces I do not remember the like of that for beauty. We were to leeward of her, and she showed us the milk-white bosoms of her sails that would flash out in silver brilliance to the sunlight through sheer force of the contrast of the vivid red of the water-line as it was lifted out of the yeast and then plunged into it again by the rolling of the craft. Large soft clouds resembling puffs of steam sailed over her waving mast-heads, where a gilt vane glowed like a streak of fire against the blue of the sky between the clouds.

X.

BUT the boat had now gained the tall fabric's side; the tackles had been hooked into her, and even while she was soaring to the davits the great maintop-sail of the Carthusian came slowly around and the sails to the royal filled. At the same moment I was sensible of a pulsation in the deck on which we were standing; the engines had been started; and in a few beats of the heart the Carthusian was on our quarter, breaking the sea under her bow as the long, slender, metal hull leaned to the weight of the high and swelling canvas.

I pulled off my hat and flourished it; Grace waved her handkerchief. A hearty cheer swept down to us, not only from the passengers assembled on the poop, but also from the crowds who watched us from the fore-castle and from the line of the bulwark-rails, and for some minutes every figure was in motion as the people gesticulated their farewells to us.

"Act the fourth," said I, bringing my eyes to Grace's face. "One more act, and then over goes the show, as the cockneys say."

"Aren't you glad to be here, Herbert?"

"I could kneel, my darling. But how good those people are! How well they have behaved! What did Mrs. Barstow give you?"

She put her hand in her pocket, opened a little parcel, and produced an Indian bracelet, a wonderfully cunning piece of work in gold.

"Upon my word!" cried I.

"How kind of her!" exclaimed Grace, with her eyes sparkling, though I seemed to catch a faint note of tears in her voice. "I shall always remember dear Mrs. Barstow."

"And what yacht is this?" said I, casting my eyes round. "A beautiful little ship indeed. How exquisitely white these planks! What money, by George, in everything the eye rests upon!"

The master, who had remained on the bridge to start the yacht, now approached. He saluted us with the respectful air of a man used to fine company, but instantly observed on his glancing at Grace that his eye rested upon her wedding-ring.

"I presume you are the captain?" said I.

"I am, sir."

"Pray what name?"

"John Verrión, sir."

"Well, Captain Verrión, I must first of all thank you heartily for receiving us. Is the owner of this vessel aboard?"

"No, sir. She belongs to the Earl of —. His lordship's been left at Madeira. He changed his mind and stopped at Madeira—him and the countess, and a party of three that was along with them—and sent the yacht home."

"I have not the honor of his lordship's acquaintance," said I, "but I think, Grace," I remarked, turning toward her, not choosing to speak of her as "this lady" while she wore the wedding-ring, nor

to call her "my wife," either, "that he is a distant connection of your aunt, Lady Amelia Roscoe."

"I don't know, Herbert," she answered.

"Any way," said I, "it is a great privilege to be received by such a vessel as this."

"His lordship 'ud wish me to do everything that's right, sir," said Captain Verrión. "I'll have a cabin got ready for you; but as to meals—" he paused, and added, awkwardly, "I'm afraid there's nothin' aboard but plain yachting fare, sir."

"When do you hope to reach Southampton, captain?"

"Monday afternoon, sir."

"A little more than two days!" I exclaimed.

"You must be a pretty fast boat."

He smiled and said, "What might be the port you want to get at, sir? Southampton may be too high up for you."

"Our destination was Penzance," said I, "but any port that is in England will do."

"Oh," said he, "there ought to be no difficulty in putting you ashore at Penzance." He then asked if we would like to step below, and forthwith conducted us into a large, roomy, elegantly—indeed sumptuously—furnished cabin, as breezy as a drawing-room, and aromatic with the smell of plantains or bananas hung up somewhere near, though out of sight.

"This should suit you, Grace," said I.

"Is it not heavenly?" she cried.

The captain stood by with pleased countenance, observing us.

"I dunno if I'm right in calling you *sir*?" he exclaimed. "I didn't rightly catch your name."

"My name is Mr. Herbert Barclay."

"Thank ye, sir. I was going to say that if you and her ladyship—"

"No, not her ladyship," I interrupted, guessing that having heard me pronounce the name of Lady Amelia Roscoe he was confounding Grace with her.

"I was going to say, sir," he proceeded, "that you're welcome to any of the sleeping-berths you may have a mind to."

The berths were aft—mere boxes, each with a little bunk, but all fitted so as to correspond in point of costliness with the furniture of the living or state-room. We chose the two foremost berths, as being the furthest of the sleeping-places from the screw; and, this matter being ended, and after declining Captain Verrión's very civil offer of refreshments, we returned to the deck.

The steamer was thrashing through it at an exhilarating speed. The long blue Atlantic surge came brimming and frothing to her quarter, giving her a lift at times that set the propeller racing, but the clean-edged, frost-like band of wake streamed far astern, where in the liquid blue of the afternoon that way hung the star-colored cloths of the Carthusian, a leaning shaft resembling a spire of ice.

We chatted as we walked the deck. We had the afterpart of the little ship entirely to ourselves; the captain came and went, but never offered to approach. In fact it was like being aboard one's own vessel; and now that we were fairly going home, being driven toward the English Channel at a steady pace of some twelve or thirteen knots in the hour by the steady resistless thrust of the propeller, we could find heart to abandon ourselves to every delightful sensation born of the sweeping passage of the beautiful steamer, to every emotion inspired by each other's society, and by the free, boundless, noble prospect of dark-blue waters that was spread around us.

We were uninterrupted till five o'clock. The captain then advanced, and, saluting us with as much respect as if we had been the earl and his lady, inquired if we would have tea served in the cabin. I answered that we should be very glad of a cup of tea, but that he was to give himself no trouble; the simplest fare he could put before us we should feel as grateful for as though he sat us down to a Mansion House dinner.

He said that the steward had been left ashore at Maderia, but that a sailor who knew what to do as a waiter would attend upon us.

"Who would suppose, Grace," said I, when we were alone, "that the ocean was so hospitable? Figure us finding ourselves ashore in such a condition as was our lot when we thought the Spitfire sinking under us—in other words, *in vauit*. At how many houses might we have knocked without getting shelter or the offer of a meal! This is like being made welcome in Grosvenor Square; and you may compare the Carthusian to a fine mansion in Bayswater."

The captain contrived for "tea" as he called it, as excellent a meal as we could have wished for—white biscuit, good butter, bananas, a piece of virgin corned beef, and preserved milk to put into our tea. What better fare could one ask for? I had a pipe and tobacco with me, and as I walked the deck in the evening with my darling I had never felt happier.

It was a rich autumn evening; the wind had slackened and was now a light air, and we lingered on deck long after the light had faded in the western sky, leaving the still young moon shining brightly over the sea, across whose dark, wrinkled, softly heaving surface ran the wake of the speeding yacht in a line like a pathway traversing a boundless moor.

I slept as soundly as one who sleeps, to wake no more; but on going on deck some little while before the breakfast was served I was grievously dis-

appointed to find a wet day. There was very little wind, but the sky was one dismal surface of leaden cloud, from which the rain was falling almost perpendicularly with a sort of obstinacy of descent that was full of the menace of a tardy abatement. Fortunately, the horizon lay well open; one could see some miles, and the steamer was washing along at her old pace, a full thirteen, with a nearly becalmed collier, ragged, wet, and staggering, all patches and bantick-boom, dissolving rapidly into the weather over the starboard quarter.

It was some time after three o'clock in the afternoon that on a sudden the engines were "slowed down," as I believe the term is, and a minute later the revolutions of the propeller ceased. There is always something startling in the abrupt cessation of the pulsing of the screw of a steamer at sea. One gets so used to the noise of the engines, to the vibratory sensation communicated in a sort of tingling throughout the frame of the vessel by the thrashing blades, that the suspension of the familiar sound falls like a fearful hush upon the ear. Grace, who had been dozing, opened her eyes.

"What can the matter be?" cried I.

As I spoke I heard a voice, apparently aboard the yacht, hailing. I pulled on my cap, turned up the collar of my coat, and ran on deck, expecting to find the yacht in the heart of a thickness of rain and fog, with some big shadow of a ship looming within biscuit-toss. It was raining steadily, but the sea was not more shrouded than it had been at any other hour of the day, saving perhaps that something of the complexion of the evening which was not far off lay somber in the wet atmosphere. I ran to the side and saw at the distance of the length of the steam yacht—my own hapless little dandy, the Spitfire! Her main-mast was wholly gone, yet I knew her at once. There she lay, looking far more miserably wrecked than when I had left her, lifting and falling forlornly upon the small swell, her poor little pump going, plied, as I instantly perceived, by the boy Bobby Allett.

I had sometimes thought of her as in harbor, and sometimes as at the bottom of the sea, but never, somehow, as still washing about, helpless and sodden, with a gushing scupper and a leaky bottom. Caudel—poor old Caudel—stood at the rail, shouting to Captain Verrión, who was singing out to him from the bridge.

I rushed forward, bawling to Captain Verrión, "That's the Spitfire! that's my yacht!" and then at the top of my voice I shouted across the space of water between the two vessels, "Ho, Caudel! where are the rest of you, Caudel? For God's sake launch your boat and come aboard!"

He stood staring at me, dropping his hand first on one side, then on the other, doubting the evidence of his sight, and reminding one of the ghost in "Hamlet": "It lifted up its head and did address itself to motion as it would speak."

Astonishment appeared to bereave him of speech. For some moments he could do nothing but stare; then up went both hands with a gesture that was eloquent of—"Well I'm *blowed*!" "Come aboard, Caudel! come aboard!" I roared, for the little dandy still had her dingey, and I did not wish to put Captain Verrión to the trouble of fetching the two fellows.

With the motions and air of a man dumfounded or under the influence of drink, Caudel addressed the lad, who dropped the pump-handle and between them they launched the boat, smack-fashion. Caudel then sprang into her with an oar and sculled across to us. He came floundering over the side, and yet again stood staring at me as though discrediting his senses. The color appeared to have been washed out of his face by wet; his oilskins had surrendered their water-proof properties, and they clung to his frame as soaked rags would. His boots were full of water, and his eyes resembled pieces of jelly-fish fixed on either side of his nose. I grasped his hand.

"Of all astonishing meetings, Caudel! But how is it that you are here? What has become of the main-mast? Where are the rest of the men? Never did a man look more shipwrecked than you. Are you thirsty? Are you starving?"

By this time Captain Verrión had joined us, and a knot of the steamer's crew stood on the fore-castle, looking first at the Spitfire, then at Caudel, scarcely I dare say, knowing as yet whether to feel amused or amazed at this singular meeting. Caudel had the slow, laborious mind of the merchant sailor. He continued for some moments to gaze heavily and dully about him, then said:

"Dummed if this ain't wonderful, too!—to find you here, sir! And your young lady, Mr. Barclay?"

"Safe and well in the cabin," I answered. "But where are the others, Caudel?"

"I'll spin you the yarn in a jiffy, sir," he answered, with a countenance that indicated a gradual recollection of his wits. "Arter you left us we got some sail upon the yacht; but just about sundown it breezed up in a bit of a puff, and the rest of the mast went overboard, a few inches above the deck. Well, there we lay. There was nothing to be done. Job Crew he says to me, 'What's next?' says he. 'What but a tow home?' says I. 'I'll have to be that,' said he, 'and pretty quick, too.' He says, 'for I've now had high enough of this galliwattin'." Job was a-wantin' in sperret, Mr. Barclay. I own I was surprised to hear him, but I says nothin', and Dick Files he says nothin', and neither do Jimi Foster. Well, at day-break a little bark bound to the river Thames comes along and hails us. I

asked her to give me a tow, that I might have a chance of falling in with a tug. The master shook his head, and sings out that he'd take us aboard, but we wasn't to talk of *towing*. On this Job says, 'Here goes for my clothes.' Jim follows him. Dick says to me, 'What are you going to do?' 'Stick to the yacht,' says I. He was beginning to argue. 'No good a-talking,' says I; 'here I am and here I stops.' Wouldn't it have been a blooming shame," he added turning slowly to Captain Verrión, "to have deserted that there dandy, when nothin's wanted but an occasional spell at the pump, and when something was bound to come along presently to give us a drag?"

Captain Verrión nodded, with a little hint of patronage, I thought, in his appreciative reception of Caudel's views.

"Well, to make an end to the yarn, Mr. Barclay," continued Caudel, "them three men went aboard the bark, taking their clothes with 'em; but when I told Bobby to go too, 'No,' says he, 'I'll stop and help ye to pump, sir.' There's the making of a proper English sailor, Mr. Barclay, in that there boy," he exclaimed, casting his eyes at the lad, who had again addressed himself to the pump.

"And here you've been all day?" said I.

"All day, sir, and all night too, and a dirty time it's bin."

"Waiting for something to give you a tow, with a long black night at hand?"

"Mr. Barclay," said he, "I told ye that I should stick to that there little dandy; and I wouldn't break my word for no man."

"You shan't be disappointed," said Captain Verrión, bestowing on Caudel a hearty nod of approval, this time untinctured by condescension. "Give us the end of your tow-rope, and we'll drag the dandy home for ye."

"Cap'n, I thank 'ee," said Caudel.

"You and the boy are pretty high worn out, I allow," exclaimed Captain Verrión. "I'll put a couple of men aboard the Spitfire. How often does she want pumping?"

"'Bout every half hour."

"You stay here," said Captain Verrión, looking with something of commiseration at Caudel, who, the longer one surveyed him, the more soaked, ashen, and shipwrecked one found him. "I'll send for the boy, and you can both dry yourselves and get a long spell of rest." He left us to give the necessary orders to his men, and, while the steamer launched her boat, I stood talking with Caudel, telling him of our adventures aboard the Carthusian, of our marriage, and so forth.

I had got into the shelter of the companion while I talked, and Grace, hearing my voice, called to me to tell her why the steamer had stopped, and if there was anything wrong.

"Come here, my darling," said I. She approached and stood at the foot of the steps. "We have fallen in with the Spitfire, Grace, and here is Caudel."

She uttered an exclamation of astonishment. He directed his oyster-like eyes into the comparative gloom, and then, catching sight of her, knuckled his forehead, and exclaimed, "Bless your sweet face! And I am glad indeed, mum, to meet you and find you both well and going home likewise." She came up the stairs to give him her hand, and I saw the old sailor's face working as he bent over it.

The steamer made a short job of the Spitfire; but a very little of maneuvering with the propeller was needed, a line connected the two vessels, the yacht's boat returned with the boy Bobby, leaving three of the steamer's crew in the dandy, the engine-room bell sounded, immediately was felt the thrilling of the engines in motion, and presently the Mermaid was ripping through it once more, with the poor little dismasted Spitfire dead in her wake. I sent for the boy, and praised him warmly for his manly behavior in sticking to Caudel. Captain Verrión then told them both to go below and get some hot tea, and put on some dry clothing belonging to them, that had been brought from the dandy.

"I'm thinking, sir," said he, when Caudel and the other had left, "that I can't do better than run you into Mount's Bay. I never was at Penzance, but I believe there's a bit of a harbor there, and no doubt a repairing shipway, and I understand that Penzance was your destination all along."

I assured him that he would be adding immeasurably to his kindness by doing as he proposed; "but as to the Spitfire," I continued, "I shan't spend a farthing upon her. My intention is to sell her, and divide what she will fetch among those who have preserved her."

Some time about two o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, the Mermaid, with the Spitfire, in tow, was steaming into Mount's Bay. I stood with Grace on my arm, looking. The land seemed as novel and refreshing to our sight as though we had kept the sea for weeks and weeks. The sun stood high; the blue waters, delicately brushed by the light wind, ran in foamless ripples; the long curve of the parade, with the roofs of houses past it, dominated by a church, came stealing out of the green slopes and hills beyond. A few smacks from Newlyn were putting to sea, and the whole picture their way was rich with the dyes of their canvas.

The steamer was brought to a stand when she was yet some distance from Penzance harbor, but long before this we had been made out from the shore, and several boats were approaching to inquire what was wrong and to offer such help as the state of the Spitfire suggested. Caudel and Captain Verrión came to us where we were standing, and the former said:

"I'm going aboard the dandy now, sir. I'll see her snug, and will then take your honor's commands."

"Our address will be my cousin's home, which is some little distance from Penzance," I answered; "here it is." And I pulled out a piece of paper and scribbled the address upon it. "You'll be without anything in your pocket, I dare say," I continued, handing him five sovereigns. "See to the boy, Candel, and if he wants to go home you must learn where he lives, for I mean to sell that yacht there, and there'll be money to go to him. And so farewell for the present," said I, shaking the honest fellow heartily by the hand.

He saluted Grace, and went over the side, followed by Bobby Allett, and both of them were presently aboard the little Spitfire.

"There are boats coming," exclaimed Captain Verrión, "which will tow your dandy into Penzance harbor, sir. Will you go ashore in one of them, or shall I have one of the yacht's lowered for you?"

Thanking him heartily, I replied that one of the Penzance boats would do very well, and then looking into my pocket-book and finding that I had no more money about me than I should need, I entered the cabin, sent the sailor attendant for some ink, and writing a couple of checks, asked Captain Verrión to accept one for himself and to distribute the proceeds of the other among his crew. He was very reluctant to take the money—said that the earl was a born gentleman, who would wish him to do everything that had been done, and that no sailor ought to receive money for serving people fallen in with in a condition of distress at sea; but I got him to put the checks into his pocket at last, and several boats by this time having come alongside, I shook the worthy man by the hand, thanked him again and again for his treatment of us, and went with Grace down the little gangway-ladder into the boat.

On landing we proceeded to the Queen's Hotel, where I ordered dinner, and then wrote a letter to my cousin, asking him and his wife to come to us as speedily as possible, adding that we had been very nearly shipwrecked and had met with some strange adventures, the narrative of which, if attempted, must fill a very considerable bundle of manuscript. This done I told the waiter to procure me a mounted messenger, and within three quarters of an hour of our arrival at Penzance my letter was on its way at a hard gallop to the little straggling village of —, of which Frank Howe was vicar.

Time passed, and I was beginning to fear that some engagement prevented Howe and his wife from coming over to us, when, hearing a noise of wheels, I stepped to the window, and saw my cousin assisting a lady out of a smart little pony carriage.

"Here they are!" I exclaimed to Grace.

There was a pause; my darling looked about her with terrified eyes, and I believe she would have rushed from the room but for the apprehension of running into the arms of the visitors as they ascended the staircase. A waiter opened the door, and in stepped Mr. and Mrs. Frank Howe. My cousin and I eagerly shook hands, but nothing could be done before the ladies were introduced. I had never before met Mrs. Howe, and found her a fair-haired, pretty woman of some eight-and-twenty years, dressed somewhat "dowdily," to use the ladies' word, but her countenance so beamed with cheerfulness and good nature that it was only needful to look at her to like her. Frank, on the other hand, was a tall, well-built man of some three-and-thirty, with small side-whiskers, deep-set eyes, large nose, and teeth so white and regular that it was a pleasure to see him smile. One guessed that whatever special form his Christianity took, it would not be wanting in muscularity. He held Grace's hand in both of his and seemed to dwell with enjoyment upon her beauty as he addressed her in some warm-hearted sentences. Mrs. Howe kissed her on both cheeks, drew her to the sofa, seated herself by her side, and was instantly voluble and delightful.

I took Frank to the window, and with all the brevity possible in a narrative of adventures such as ours, related what had befallen us. He listened with a running commentary of "By Jove! You don't say so! Is it possible?" and other such exclamations, constantly directing glances at Grace, who was now deep in talk with Mrs. Howe, and as I could tell by the expression in her face, excusing her conduct by explaining the motives of it.

Mrs. Howe's air was one of affection and sympathy, as though she had come to my darling with the resolution to love her and to help her.

"She is very young, Herbert," said Frank, in a low voice.

"She is eighteen," I answered.

"She is exquisitely beautiful. I cannot wonder at you, even if I could have the heart to condemn you. But is not that a wedding-ring on her finger?"

"It is," I answered, looking at him.

He looked hard at me in return, and remarked, "A mere provision against public curiosity, I presume? For you are not married?"

"I am not so sure of that," I answered; "but my story is not yet ended." And I then told him of the marriage service which had been performed by Captain Parsons on board the ship *Cartusian*.

"Tut!" cried he, with a decided Churchman-like shake of the head when I had made an end. "That's no marriage, man."

"I believe it is, then," said I; "though, of course, until you unite us we do not consider ourselves man and wife."

"I should think not," he exclaimed with vehemence. "What! a plain master of a ship empowered to solemnize holy matrimony! Certainly not. No Churchman would hear of such a thing."

"Ay, but it's not for the Church; it's the affair of the law. If the law says it's all right the Church is bound to regard it as right."

"Certainly not," he cried, and was proceeding, but I interrupted him by repeating that we had consented to be married by Captain Parsons in the forlorn hope that the contract might be binding.

"But without bans—without license—without the consent of the young lady's guardians? No, no," he cried, "you are not married. But it is highly desirable," he added with a look at Grace, "that you should get married without delay. And now what do you propose to do?"

"Well, time may be saved by your publishing the bans at once, Frank."

"Yes, but you must first obtain the guardian's consent."

"Oh, confound it!" I cried, "I did not know that. I believed the bans could be published while the consent was being worked for."

He mused awhile, eying his wife and Grace, who continued deep in conversation, and then, after a considerable pause, exclaimed:

"There is nothing to be done but this: we must revert to your original scheme. Miss Bellassys —"

"Call her Grace," said I.

"Well, Grace must come and stay with us."

I nodded; for that I had intended all along.

"I will find a lodging for you in the village," I nodded again. "Meanwhile—this very day, indeed—you must sit down and write to Lady Amelia Roscoe, saying all that your good sense can suggest, and taking your chance, as you have put it, of the appeal your association with her niece will make to her ladyship's worldly vanity and to her perceptions as a woman of society."

"All that you are saying," I replied, "I had long ago resolved on; and you will find this scheme, as you have put it, almost word for word in the letter in which I told you of my plans and asked you to marry us."

"Yes, I believe my recommendations are not original," said he. "There is something more to suggest, however. If Lady Amelia will send Grace her consent, why wait for the bans to be published? Why not procure a license? It is due to Grace," said he, sinking his voice and sending a look of admiration at her, "that you should make her your wife as speedily as possible."

"Yes, yes, I have heard that said before. I have been a good deal advised on this head. My dear fellow, only consider; would not I make her my wife this instant if you will consent to marry us?"

The pony and trap had been sent around to some adjacent stables, but by seven o'clock we had made all necessary arrangements and the vehicle was again brought to the door. I then sat down to write to Lady Amelia Roscoe.

It is some years now since all this happened. I have no copy of that letter, and my memory is not strong in points of this sort. I recollect, however, that after making several attempts I produced something which was brief almost to abruptness, and that it satisfied me as on the whole very well put, not wanting in a quality of what I might term mild brutality, for this was an element I could not very well manage without having regard to what I had to ask and what I had to tell. And let this reference to that letter suffice: though I must add I took care to enclose a copy of Captain Parsons' certificate of our marriage, with the names of those who had signed it, affirming that the marriage was good in point of law, as she might easily assure herself by consulting her solicitors, and also acquainting her in no doubtful terms that the wedding-ring was on Grace's finger and that we regarded ourselves as husband and wife.

I had scarcely dispatched this letter when Candel was announced. He stood in the doorway, cap in hand, knocking his forehead and backing a bit with a rolling gait, after the custom of the British merchant sailor.

"Well, Mr. Barclay, sir, and how are ye again? And how's the young lady after all these her traverses?"

I bade him sit down, pulled the bell for a glass of grog for him, and asked for news of the Spitfire.

"Well, sir," he answered, "she's just what I've come to talk to ye about. She'd started a butt, as I all along thought, otherwise she's as sound as a bell. There was a shipwright as came down to look at her, and he asked me what we was going to do. I told him I didn't think the gent as owned her meant to repair her. 'I rather fancy,' I says, says I, feeling my way, 'that he wants to sell her.' 'How much do ye ask, d'ye know?' says he, a-looking at the little dandy. 'I can't answer that,' says I, 'but I'm sure he'll accept any reasonable offer.' Says he, 'May I view her?' 'Sartinly,' I says, says I. He thoroughly overhauled her, inside and out, and then says he, 'I believe I can find a customer for this here craft. Suppose you go and find out what the gentleman wants, and let me know. You'll find me at —,' and here he names a public-house."

"Get what you can for her, Candel," I answered; "the more the better for those to whom the money

will go. For my part, as you know, I consider her as at the bottom; but, since you've pulled her through, I'll ask you to pack up certain articles which are on board—the cabin clock, the plate, my books; and I named a few other items of the little craft's internal furniture."

Well, he sat with me for half an hour, talking over the dandy and our adventures, then left me, and I went into the town to make a few necessary purchases, missing the society of my darling as though I had lost my right arm; indeed, I felt so wretched without her that, declining the landlord's invitation to join a select circle of Penzance wits over whom he was in the habit of presiding in the evening in the smoking-room full of the vapors of tobacco and the steam of hot rum and whiskey, I went to bed at nine o'clock, and may say that I did not sleep the less soundly for missing the heave of the ocean.

Next morning shortly after breakfast Frank arrived to drive me over to —. Until we were clear of the town he could talk of nothing but Grace—how sweet she was, how exquisite her breeding, how gentle. All this was as it should be, and I heard him with delight.

But to make an end, seeing that but little more remains to be told. It was four days after our arrival at — that I drove Grace over to Penzance to enable her to keep an appointment with her dress-maker. Candel still hung about the quaint old town, and had sent me a rude briny scrawl, half the words looking as though they had been smeared out by his little finger and the others as if they had been written by his protruded tongue, in which he said, in spelling beyond expression wonderful, that he had brought the shipwright to terms, and wished to see me. I left Grace at the dress-maker's and walked to the address where Candel had said I should find him. He looked highly soaped and polished, his hair shone like his boots, and he wore a new coat, with several fathoms of spotted kerchief wound around about his throat.

After we had exchanged a few sentences of greeting and good will, he addressed me thus:

"Your honor gave me lieve to do the best I could with the little dandy. Well, Mr. Barclay, sir, this is what I've done; and here's the money."

He thrust his hands into the pockets of his trousers, which buttoned up square as a Dutchman's stern after the fashion that is long likely to remain popular with the men of the Candel breed, and pulling out a long chamois-leather bag, he extracted from it a large quantity of bank-notes, very worn, greasy, and crumpled, and some sovereigns and shillings which looked as if they had been stowed away in an old stocking since the beginning of the century. He surveyed me with a gaze of respectful triumph, perhaps watching for some expression of astonishment.

"How much have you there, Candel?"

"You'll scarcely credit it, sir," said he, grinning.

"But how much, man? how much?"

"One hundred and seventy-three pound, fourteen shillin', as I'm a man!" cried he, smiting the table with his immense fist.

I smiled, for though I had bought the dandy cheap, she had cost me a very great deal more by the time she was fit to go afloat in than Candel had received for her. But Grace was not to be kept waiting; and I rose.

"You will give what you think fair to the boy Bobby, Candel."

He looked at me stupidly.

"Did I not tell you," said I, "that what the dandy fetched was to be yours, and that something of it was to go to the boy? As to those who deserted you, they may call upon me for their wages, but they'll get no more."

He seemed overwhelmed; and indeed his astonishment surprised me, for I had imagined my intentions with regard to the yacht were well known to him.

Grace and I returned to — somewhere about four o'clock, having lunched at Penzance. We alighted at the vicarage, and entered the fragrant little dining-room. My cousin and his wife were sitting waiting for us. Sophy on our entrance started up and cried:

"Grace, here is a letter for you. I believe it is from your aunt."

My darling turned white, and I was sensible of growing very nearly as pale as she. He hand trembled as she took the letter; she eyed me pitiously, seemed to make an effort to break the envelope, then extending it to me, said, "I dare not read it."

I instantly tore it open, read it to myself once, then aloud:

"Lady Amelia Roscoe begs to inform her niece that she washes her hands of her. She wishes never to see nor to hear of her again. So far as Lady Amelia Roscoe's consent goes, her niece is at liberty to do what she likes and go where she likes. Any further communications which Lady Amelia's niece may require to make must be addressed to her ladyship's solicitors, Messrs. Fox & Wyndall, Lincoln's Inn Fields."

"Thank Heaven!" I exclaimed, drawing the deepest breath I had ever fetched in my life.

"Now, Herbert, I am at your service," said Frank.

Grace was crying, and Sophy, giving her husband and me a reassuring look, with sisterly gentleness took my darling's arm and led her out of the room.

[THE END.]